Hawaii's Public Libraries are a Sound Economic Investment – Selected Testimonies from Patrons

“Libraries are the hub of a community and provide life-long learning opportuni- ties for everyone in the area. Libraries provide the information and tools that are necessary in a normal economy, but are needed even more in times of economic strain. We should be offering more hours and more assistance to those who need help researching opportunities to help themselves. Free public libraries are the foundation of our society, and we must do everything we can to ensure their stability.”

Byrde Cestare, Executive Director, Friends of the Library of Hawaii

“We realize cuts maybe necessary, but we ask that prudent choices be made since the library and their staff and resources have a great potential to shape the future communities by influencing our youth to be brighter, more creative, and more hopeful.”

Annaabel Clay, Milliun Public Library patron

“I own a small business, and am likely to use a public library to support my business. For example, I have relied on the Hawaii State Library for market research, as well as finding statistics for presentations to my clients. Many library services such as legal resources, high speed Internet access for the public, and business periodicals are extremely beneficial to business and economic growth in Hawaii. If these library services were reduced I think it could interfere with business growth for many firms like mine.”

Janet Mason, Hawaii State Library and Aina Halau Public Library patron

“My older son initially struggled with learning to read, but because he loved the stories Aunty Brenda and her staff (Feitels and Oregen) read to him, he never gave up trying to learn to read for himself, and he has since overcome his reading disability. I understand that during difficult economic times, it is necessary to cut funding to many “essential services”; however, it is during difficult economic times that libraries again become an important resource for all people. It is during difficult times that the libraries must remain fully staffed and funded to accommodate people who use Internet services, etc. to search for jobs, or simply to be in a place where people can talk to someone who can help them find answers.”

J.K., Kalani-Palama Public Library patron

“Molokai is rather unique in that we have very little in the way of normal entertainment (no movie theaters, bowling alley, etc.) So the facilities of our library is a focal point of our community, and I feel we must keep the support at the highest possible level.”

Frances Feeter, Molokai Public Library patron

“I am writing on behalf of my fiancié, a legally blind bedridden quadriplegic with MS. In our experience, the public library system is unmatched in ef- ficiency, responsiveness, quality, and professionalism. The Library (for the Blind and Physically Handicapped) and every kind, courteous, helpful staff person changed his life. He has mentioned countless times to his physicians that without his LBPH membership and their newsletters, free audiomagazine subscriptions, book recommendations, and special programs, his quality of life would be drastically limited. Please don’t disable one of the better functioning systems in Hawaii. The impact on the disabled populations would be devastating as there is nothing comparable to take the place of this service.”

L.D., Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped patron

Several concerned patrons including Howard Shima (Salt Lake-Moanalua Public Library), testified last month at the Board of Education meeting regarding HSPLS budget cuts.

How will a 10% Budget Cut Affect Our Patrons?

With a 10% budget cut, HSPLS will be able to keep all 51 public libraries open, though many will be forced to reduce public service hours, without eliminating any permanent staff positions. A total of $2,981,746 would be cut from the HSPLS budget. Two main areas will be targeted:

- First, funds for popular, centrally purchased books and materials would be eliminated ($1,825,448), including:
  - Bestseller Hot Picks (such as new titles by J.K. Rowling, Lemony Snicket, Christopher Paolini, or Newbery, Caldecott, or Nene Award winning books)
  - Young Adult High Demand titles (such as new titles like “Twilight” by Stephanie Meyer, new anime, or Best Books for Young Adults)
  - Audio Visual High Demand titles

- Second, $1,156,300 would be cut from the HSPLS budget. Two main areas will be targeted:
  - Employee and public services hours, without eliminating any permanent staff positions
  - Public service hours will be reduced from 4,967 hours to 4,280 hours

To put the further budget cuts in perspective, the HSPLS budget consists of three major areas: personnel costs, roughly 80% of the budget; digital and print materials amounting to about 10%; and the remaining 10% consists of public service hours. How will you be affected?
You Can Help By Supporting Hawaii’s Public Libraries!

N ow more than ever, Hawaii’s public libraries need your support, and an effective way to demonstrate your love for public libraries is by becoming a library advocate!

Please write a letter, send an email or fax, or call the Governor and your state legislators to let them know how you or your family have benefited and been enriched by services and programs provided by Hawaii’s public libraries.

Whether you choose to make a phone call, type an email, or write a letter to your elected officials, here are some helpful tips on how to become an effective library advocate:

• Identify yourself and share which public library you and your family use.

• State your message. Let your elected officials know how important the library is to you, and that you are counting on them to ensure that libraries have adequate funds and resources.

• Be specific. State how the budget cuts to the library system will affect you and your family. When you write during the legislative session, cite a bill (as an example, Hawaii State Public Library System EDN 407) or provide other identifying information.

• Write from the heart. Provide a personal story and focus on the people who depend on library services. Share real-life stories of how the library makes a difference in the lives of constituents.

• Be brief – one page is easier to read, and will likely be read!

• Include your name, mailing address, email address, and telephone number in the letter, to allow your legislator to respond to you.

Here are the addresses/phone numbers/links for the following elected officials:

The Honorable Linda Lingle
Governor of Hawaii
State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813
Phone: (808) 586-0034
Fax: (808) 586-0006
Email: governor.lingle@hawaii.gov

This link will take you to a directory of State Legislators:

State Representatives
http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/site1/house/members/members.asp

State Senators
http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/site1/senate/members/members.asp

Additional information, bulletin points, and sample testimony letters will be posted on the HSPLS website, www.librarieshawaii.org. If you have any questions, please contact your local library, or the Library Development Services Section at (808) 831-6878 or by email at lds@librarieshawaii.org.

HSPLS Cuts, from front page
of everything else, including utilities, which currently total more than $2 million, or more than 5%.

After hearing testimony from several concerned library patrons and receiving numerous written testimonies from customers from all over the state, the BOE members approved the HSPLS’ proposed 10% reduction for its upcoming biennium operating and capital improvement project budget request for fiscal years 2009-2011. The Board members agreed that a 15% budget cut would have devastating and lasting negative effects on the public library system, as well as on you, the people of Hawaii.

10% Budget Cut, from front page
(such as recently released movie DVDs)
• Foreign Language Books (in Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese and Spanish languages)
• Digital Audio Books and e-Books (new downloadable titles from OverDrive).

While individual libraries will continue to receive a small book budget, allocations will be significantly reduced. Library staff will be unable to purchase titles to keep collections current and valid. With fewer available books, customers may expect access or waiting time for materials to increase. Transfers between branches will greatly increase which will likely result in long delays in getting highly-circulated books back on the shelves.

Secondly, vacant positions would be eliminated, storytelling would be indefinitely for security and safety reasons. Outreach programs would be eliminated, storytelling would be greatly reduced, and special programs in all areas would be curtailed.

How will a 15% Budget Cut Affect Our Patrons?

W ith a 15% budget cut, a total of $4,472,619 would be taken from the HSPLS budget.

In addition to the previously mentioned areas (eliminating popular, centrally-purchased materials, freezing vacancies and limiting substitutes and student hires), HSPLS would be forced to close 6-8 libraries and eliminate 20 positions. The personnel and operational costs from these libraries will allow HSPLS to meet this budget cut.

Now that the BOE has approved a 10% budget reduction for HSPLS, what happens next?

Over the next 2 to 3 weeks, Governor Lingle will carefully analyze the budget reduction scenarios submitted by all state departments in order to prepare and submit a balanced budget in time for the opening of the Legislative Session in January 2009.

Governor Lingle may choose to reduce, increase, or accept HSPLS’ 10% budget reduction.

Additional information, bullet points, and sample testimony letters will be posted on the HSPLS website, www.librarieshawaii.org. If you have any questions, please contact your local library, or the Library Development Services Section at (808) 831-6878 or by email at lds@librarieshawaii.org.