

## Comments on May 6, 2013 BLT Agenda Items

Comments on the Newport Beach Board of Library Trustees agenda items by:

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### Comments on agenda

The listing of Item 5.B.2 on the agenda:

*"2. Public Give-Away Policy - Review of and possible revisions to the current Public Give-Away"*

may have been inadvertently truncated. It gives the impression the Board will be discussing some sort of giveaway of public funds or library property.

In the absence of a better explanation (and per page 2 of the draft April 1 Minutes, and the most recent Board of Library Trustees Monitoring List), it might have been better listed as:

*"2. Public Give-Away **Shelf** Policy - Review of and possible revisions to the current Public Give-Away **Policy.**"*

I also think first time visitors to Board meetings might find confusing the listing under Consent Calendar of Item 5.A.2. "*Library Activities – Monthly update of library events, services and statistics*" compared to the very similar sounding Item 5.C. ("*Monthly Reports*" including "*Civic Center Update*" and "*Library Services Director Report*"). It might be helpful to indicate that the former are written reports regarding events and activities in March, while the latter are oral reports for the month just completed, namely April.

### Item 4. Approval of Minutes - April 1, 2013, Regular Meeting

I did not notice any typos in the draft minutes. Yet, although they seem complete and accurate, I continue to feel those who did not attend the meeting will have difficulty relating the reports to the agenda framework within which the items were presented.

To clarify the context, it would seem helpful to use the agenda as a template into which the reports could be inserted, or, at least to retain the agenda numbering. Comparison with the format of the Council minutes prepared by the City Clerk, and those of the other Boards and Commissions, most of which use that system, might be helpful.

### Item 5.A.1. Customer Comments

**Comment 2** seems to have been dealt with as a request to add a link to the Library's website. I read it, however, as an invitation to advertise on someone else's website/newsletter ("Macaroni Kid"). Does the Board have a policy on this? That said, the Board's policy on deciding what links to external sites should be allowed on the Library website remains unclear to me.

I wholeheartedly agree with **Comment 5** regarding the flawed design of the new automated entryway from Central to the Civic Mall, with the support pillar blocking the exact spot where the public is expected to enter and exit. It is embarrassing to recall, but leaving the second floor on my first visit after the opening of the expansion, I collided with one of the clear sliding panes,

fortunately causing no damage to myself or the glass. Being in a hurry to get to the City Council meeting at the far end of the mall, and paying more attention to the papers I had just printed out at the Reference Desk than to where I was going, I assumed the whirring motor sounds meant the panels on either side of the pillar had opened and I could pass through on the left or right. Only after becoming one of the first human "bird strikes" on one of those ever-so-clean (and hence practically invisible) new windows did I look over and realize that only a tiny aperture directly behind the pillar had opened, and that those in a hurry to get out (as I was) had to carefully maneuver around that pillar to get through.

This is obviously always going to be a problem for visitors unfamiliar with the entryway, and the sort of problem that needs to be addressed before the rest of us become so familiar with the door as to cease to see it as a problem. As an immediate precaution for those first-time visitors, I think some sort of decoration or signage should be affixed to the moving panes (as is frequently done on residential sliding doors) so it will be more immediately apparent whether they are open or closed. In the longer run, short of redesigning the support pillar to a V-, or goal post, shape that would get the structure out of the way of the door, the glass area could be replaced, as the commenter suggests, with left and right automated doors to either side of, and well separated from the pillar, or even with old-fashioned manually-operated doors with handles.

**Comment 6** ("*Will there be a children's writing contest in the near future?*") It would have seemed appropriate to ask what age/grade level of children the commenter was asking about. I believe there may be community organizations, other than the Library (and perhaps other libraries?), that conduct writing contests, to which a reference might have been appropriate, as well as, if the age were appropriate, to the Foundation's annual (?) Teen Writing Contest.

**Comment 7**, regarding the poor privacy of the toilet in the new second floor men's restroom at Central, brings to mind a related issue, which is that the floors of the men's restrooms in all City facilities, but particularly the libraries, are continually strewn with paper towels. I suspect this may be the same on the ladies' side, for I don't think the problem is that men are inherently messy, but rather that with the dispensers provided, when one tries with wet hands to pull out one towel, as many as a dozen come tumbling out behind, and in the absence of a deft maneuver to catch them, fall to the floor. I suspect this problem of towels on the floor could be solved either by searching for a vendor with a towel design that allows the towels to be removed one at a time, or by changing to a dispenser design that allows that.

### **Item 5.A.2. Library Activities**

Regarding the last line of the **Library Services Director** report (on page 1), although only peripherally relevant to the Library Board, I failed to understand what was so urgent about the "*request for City Council to pass a resolution to set up a funding source for public art*" that it needed to be pushed through to Council, as it was, without any formal public review by the City Arts Commission, and I hope the Library Board will be vigilant that important library-related requests are not similarly presented to Council without public review by the Trustees.

Regarding the first line of the **Branch and Youth Services Coordinator** report, as mentioned at the April Board meeting, another factor contributing to what I assume to be a significant uptick

in activity at the Mariners Branch is that the main library off 19<sup>th</sup> Street in Costa Mesa is closed for remodeling through July.

### **Item 5.A.3. Expenditure Status Report**

Contrary to what the written description in the agenda says, the May 3<sup>rd</sup> Item 5.A.3 printout of "operating expenses," at least as posted on-line with the agenda packet, does not appear to list "services, salaries and benefits by department." Are there other expenses that have not been listed?

### **Item 5.A.4. Board of Library Trustees Monitoring List**

1. Since there is a possibility a new Trustee might be empanelled on July 1<sup>st</sup>, it would seem "*Review FY 2013/ 2014 Holidays / Meeting Schedule - Jun 3, 2013*" should come on or after July 1, rather than before.
2. Regarding "*Library Wish Lists (Friends of the Library & Foundation) - Jul 1, 2013*," I hope staff's plans for spending those funds will be made available prior to that meeting, rather than only at the meeting, where it is difficult to propose changes. Given recent equipment problems, I would suggest adding to the wish list a back-up scanning station.
3. Regarding "*Review / Possible Revisions to the City Council Policies for the Library (ongoing) - Sep 3, 2013*," I hope it is clearer to the Board than it is to me why, since under the City Charter the people have given the Library Board the power and duty to "*Have charge of the administration of City libraries and make and enforce such by-laws, rules and regulations as may be necessary therefor*," some of its policies are presented to the City Council for inclusion in the City Clerk's Council Policy Manual, and others (such as those on this agenda) are not.
4. Regarding "*Review of Possible Library Expansion Naming Opportunities – TBD*," it appears to me that at least one prominent portion of the expansion (the lounge at the top of the staircase) has already been named.

### **Item 5.B.1. Laptop and iPad Circulation Policy**

It is very refreshing to see a staff report explaining the proposal to the Board and public prior to action on it. That said, it would have been even more helpful to see the draft policy in a redlined (strikeout/underline) format, so that the proposed changes could be more easily seen.

Among questions that come to mind:

1. Why are all 30 iPads confined to use at the Central Library? Although the new expansion is wonderful, the Board should remain mindful that the system has branches, and these new devices might be equally or even more useful at locations less technologically complete than Central, and where desktop workstations may be in short supply.
2. Bullet point 2 in the draft policy is confusing if a change in laptop policy is not being proposed: I don't know about Balboa and Corona del Mar, but at the Mariners Branch, as at Central, laptops are checked out and returned at the reference desk, *not* at the circulation desk.

3. Bullet point 9 ("*Laptops and iPads may be renewed as long as one laptop/iPad is available for checkout*") does not make clear that the renewal has to be done in person at the desk where the item was checked out. It is also unclear whether one of each type, or just one total, must be available. Since iPads may not be useful to all users, I believe the policy should be one of each, although I think a better policy would be for the checkout person to maintain a waiting list and to allow checkouts if and only if there is no one waiting. An even better policy would be to integrate the laptops/iPads into the Cassie reservation system. Given the large late charge, I personally have found it both distracting and nerve racking to have to continually check the time (often misdisplayed on the laptops) in order to be able to accomplish the laptop renewal before the grace period ends, but not so far in advance as to cut short one's previously allotted time. I'm sure some kind of automatic on-screen warning, as occurs at the desktop stations, would be greatly appreciated by all.
4. In Bullet point 10, the phrase "*checked out less than 2.5 hours before closing*" should be deleted. I believe the intent is that *all* devices be turned in the same number of minutes before closing, but with that phrase, the policy could be argued to *not* apply to a device checked out earlier in the day and later renewed. I also find the proposal of a 30 minutes before closing return time unreasonably large, and I don't believe it is currently enforced. Based on my observations, 5 or 10 minutes would be adequate, and 15 minutes more than adequate, for the check-in librarian to scan the machine back in, place it back on the shelf and return the ID. There simply is not a large number of devices being returned at closing, and it would be extremely frustrating to arrive at, say, the Mariners Branch 30 minutes before closing to find all the desktop stations occupied (as they frequently are at that hour) only to be told that the laptops cannot be checked out, even for 5 minutes, due to Board policy. And again, at least at the Mariners Branch, laptops are currently returned at the Reference Desk, not the Circulation Desk, as the proposed policy would state (and I am here copying the inconsistent capitalization found in that policy). The confusion about what desk is correct at the different branches could be eliminated by defining, near the start of the policy, a "Checkout Location" for each facility, then using that term throughout the remainder of the policy.
5. Since the replacement charges for lost or damaged equipment are written into the proposed policy, it would seem helpful to mention the fine for late returns, and how it is figured.
6. Finally, I think it would be wise to replace the bullet points with a numbered list, and to provide a revision date. If nothing else, a numbered list would, in the present comments, have made it much less awkward to refer to specific policy provisions.

I don't know if library staff would agree with my observation about the lack of any current problem with late check-in of laptops, but I believe it should be regarded much like the potential for people lining up at the circulation desk with materials to check out at closing. I have only rarely observed a problem with this, and on those rare occasions I have never seen the library staff be so heartless as to turn away those in line because the precise closing minute had passed. It seems to me that strict enforcement of a 30-minute before closing moratorium on laptop check-ins and checkouts places a very real and continuing inconvenience on the public whose expense cannot be honestly justified by consideration of the mostly theoretical burden that a more forgiving policy might, on rare occasion, place on staff.

### Item 5.B.2. Public Give-Away Policy

As stated at the previous meeting, it is my belief that a public library should be a source of information of all sorts, including the kinds of media one finds on newsstand racks. I believe the current, highly restrictive policy reproduced in the staff report is neither necessary, appropriate, nor strictly enforced. Before taking action, staff and the Trustees may wish to personally evaluate the practice at other Orange County libraries.

My recollection is that those libraries perform a real service by making local community publications widely available, and do so without the creating the unmanageable clutter that some of the Trustees seem to anticipate. For example, the large and quite modern new Orange County Public Library branch on Main Street in Tustin has an alcove off the main entry with shelving for free publications of all sorts (including a bulletin board and fliers from community groups, as well as some foreign language materials). The area is neatly maintained, and although I don't know what their precise criteria may be, I believe a card posted there simply says that materials need to be cleared with a librarian prior to placement. The modern new City of Orange Public Library on Chapman also has shelving in the foyer where materials of the same sort are displayed, and I am unaware of it creating a clutter problem, either.

With specific regard to the staff report:

1. As noted on page 1 of the present agenda comments, the existing name of this Board policy can be rather confusing to the uninitiated. Especially as at least part of it is really a policy about giving away private materials in public spaces, rather than a "public giveaway" (as in corrupt politics).
2. Prior to the recent expansion, I believe the Central Library had copies on its give-away shelves of local free media such as the *School News* and at one time the *Newport Independent* and possibly the *OC Weekly* (?), which are neither government publications, nor meet the size standards stated in the current Board policy.
3. Since the expansion, I believe the former shelves at Central have been replaced by two smaller rotating merchandise display type kiosks, and non-governmental and oversized publications are no longer allowed, to the mystification of at least some of the reference staff.
4. Non-governmental and oversized publications may *still* be observed on the giveaway shelving at Mariners Branch, even though a copy of the current policy is posted there.
5. The snippet from "*the City Hall employee manual*" reproduced at the end of the present staff report, and describing allowable uses for the end-caps in the departmental bays in the new City Hall is correct but misleading. Each bay also has public lounge areas with chairs and coffee tables, on which an array of free give-away type materials are displayed. It is unclear if there is a clear policy, yet, for their use, but I have observed the *Daily Pilot* and the *OC Weekly* on display in Bay A (where I understand they are delivered), and elsewhere.
6. I find it odd that what seems to be currently allowed in the City Hall (the casual offering of free non-governmental reading material in public lounge areas), is strictly prohibited by

current Board policy in City Library facilities, when one might think the attitude towards censorship in the two venues would be just the opposite.

### **Item 5.B.3. Media Center Policy and Use Agreement**

1. As with Item 5.B.1, to facilitate reference to specific policy points, I believe a numbered (or lettered) policy is preferable to one in bullet point format.
2. The staff report calls the facility the "Media Center" (consisting of a "Media Lab" and a "Recording Studio"), but the draft policy calls it the "Media Suite." Which is correct?
3. Will the online learning tutorials (cited in the staff report) be available only in the Media Suite? Or more generally within the Library? The latter would seem much more efficient.
4. The policy fails to make clear whether the staff person with whom one completes the various transactions can be found in the Media Suite, or elsewhere in the Library, and also whether reservations can be made other than in person, and how far in advance.
5. In Bullet point 7, is a separate noise policy planned for the Recording Studio?
6. In Bullet point 8, is the intended reference really to "our three *meeting* rooms" (that is, the Friends Room and conference rooms) or to "our three *study* rooms"?
7. As with Item 5.B.1, what is the decision to close the Media Suite 30 minutes before the general closing time based on? Shouldn't a more relaxed policy be considered until events prove it impractical?

### **Item 5.B.4. Critical Review of Online Database Resources & Services / Database Usage Report**

I hope staff will address the *Orange County Register's* recent decision to erect a "pay-wall" making its content, including their local community paper, *The Current*, unavailable in electronic format to non-subscribers. Although most of the articles can be viewed a day or two later on ProQuest, the text has been reformatted and the graphics are generally absent. And although paper copies are available, if staff can suggest ways to restore electronic access to library patrons (articles could formerly be viewed *before* they appeared in print, not after), it may be something the Trustees would want to discuss.