

Assessment of Operations and Finances  
Of the Uinta County Library

October 15, 2016

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## Executive Summary

The Uinta County Library is actively striving to meet the challenges it faces in providing quality public library service. The library has commissioned this study to examine the efficiency of its operations and options for increased funding. The study incorporates statistical data analysis, interviews and meetings with stakeholders and visits to the three library locations.

There can be no doubt that the library is facing major challenges. It has had little budget growth throughout at least the past ten years, and has had major budget reductions in recent years. Among 23 Wyoming county libraries, the Uinta County Library ranks:

19th in staff expenditures per capita  
 23rd in collection expenditures  
 21st in total operating expenditures per capita

The library has had virtually no collection budget for four consecutive years, and its collection has aged drastically. As a result, circulation of library materials has decreased by 35% during the past six years.

This is undeniably a library in trouble but one that is choosing to face and overcome those challenges. This study attempts to answer these questions:

Is additional funding needed and feasible?  
 Is increased efficiency in library operations possible?  
 Can changes in the scope and emphasis of library services improve operations within existing resources?

In our opinion, the answer to all of those questions is absolutely yes. This report discusses the findings in our evaluation and provides a broad set of recommendations along with some appendices of statistical comparisons with comparable libraries. Recommendations include:

- Funding
- Planning and priorities
- Collections
- Service hours
- Organization and operations
- Staffing
- Evanston Library building

It seems that the library has been in a position of merely trying to survive for a number of years. In our opinion it is essential for the library to get past that and make choices that will lead to real improvement of library service. There are no easy or painless solutions to the challenges facing the library. To do so the library board and other stakeholders must commit themselves to some significant choices and support library administration in implementing those choices.

This report is based upon a variety of activities to gather input and assess the operations and financial circumstances of the Uinta County Library as described in the methodology section of the report. The findings and recommendations are the sole opinion of the project consultant, Jim Minges. We want to thank the library staff, and all of the stakeholders and groups with whom we consulted for their courteous, open and candid comments and questions.

## Methodology

This study consisted of several steps:

1. Data analysis. A range of statistical data was reviewed, including documentation and data provided by the library and comparative data available on the web site of the Wyoming State Library. In addition to comparing the Uinta County Library and its individual branch locations to comparable Wyoming libraries, the Evanston library was closely compared to a peer library in Bonner Springs, Kansas that serves a similar size population with higher usage and a similar size staff.

2. Interviews. We conducted telephone interviews with 12 stakeholders:

Teresa Whybark – President of Uinta County Library Board of Directors.

Charles Butcher – Treasurer of Uinta County Library Board of Directors.

Cathy Wiggins – Foundation Board member

Jamie Lund – Foundation Board member

George Strawley, - Library Director

Claire Francis – Head of adult services

Kathy Kallas – Circulation supervisor at Evanston branch.

Suzi Worthen – Branch manager of Lyman Library.

Misty Baker – Branch manager of Mountain View Library

Terry Brimhall – Uinta County treasurer.

Walter Riebenack – President of Uinta Bank and a supporter of the library.

Jamie Markus – Wyoming State Librarian

These interviews provided some valuable insights from varying points of view about the issues facing the county library.

3. Onsite visit. We conducted a three-day site visit to Uinta County, including meetings with the library board, foundation board, County Commission and a well-attended and active public forum. In addition we visited all three library service locations, including discussions with the branch librarians in Lyman and Mountain View, and a staff meeting in Evanston, as well as individual meetings with key staff and extensive discussions with the library director. We also spent some time in examining the Evanston library with some attention to the efficiency of the building layout.

## Findings

Uinta County has the 10<sup>th</sup> largest population among the 23 Wyoming counties, and the county library might be expected to provide a high level of library service. However, in our opinion the library faces a number of severe limitations and challenges. We have formed a number of opinions about the operation, funding and administration of the library. Most fundamentally, it is our opinion that the library cannot function adequately in the manner in which it currently operates within the financial resources at its disposal. The library appears to have been in a state of decline for at least ten years, although those problems have increased in recent years. The library and the county have not yet addressed the fundamental problem and made the difficult choices needed to provide adequate service. Instead the library has been in a state of just managing to survive for too long. It is our hope that this report will provide assistance to the library board and director in finding a way forward to strengthen library service. We will discuss our major findings in two categories: indicators of the deterioration in library collections and services, and the management and operational issues that have contributed to the library's situation.

### 1. Critical service and resource findings.

**Library Use.** *Use of the Uinta County Library is in a dramatic and continuing state of decline.* The circulation of books and other materials from the library has decreased by a shocking 35% during the years 2011-2016. This cannot be attributed to technology or other factors affecting all libraries. While most libraries are experiencing slight declines in circulation due to availability of downloadable and streaming books and media, 35% is not a "slight" decline. During the same six-year period the other Wyoming county libraries had a combined circulation reduction of only 7.7%, or a little over 1% annually. This problem is accelerating: the Uinta County Library saw its greatest drop in circulation during 2015-2016. Circulation is not the only measure of library use. However, although the number of registered borrowers has increased the number of actual visits to the library has also declined drastically from 152,384 in 2011 to 100,022 in 2015. People are coming to the library far less often and borrowing far fewer items.

**Library collection.** *The library collection is in a long-term state of neglect that has gradually turned much of the collection into a museum for outdated materials. We believe this is the primary reason for declining library use.* The library has had virtually no budget for adding to its collections of books and other media provided to the public for the past four years, and the collection budget was inadequate even before that. Even if we include the library foundation funds that are not part of the library budget they only equal 5.7% of the library budget, and should not be considered a long-term substitute for a library collection budget. A healthy library should be spending on the order of 10% of its budget for purchase of library materials. Nine Wyoming libraries exceed that, and the state average in 2015 was 8.1%. (That data includes only library funds. If expenditures by library foundations or friends groups were included it would be higher.) The library is only adding new materials equal to about 1.25% of its collection, meaning that it would require approximately 70 years to replace the collection. 4% would be a fairly minimal replacement rate. In addition, most of the items being added to the

collection are donations, not items selected and purchased by the library. Under these circumstances it is inevitable that a large proportion of the library collection is outdated, in poor condition, or no longer of interest. We took the opportunity to examine some areas in the nonfiction collection of the Evanston library and found the items on the shelf to be quite outdated. In over 40 years of consulting we have never seen a library as large as Uinta County with such a sustained low level of collection development. A public library is not a museum for books; it needs to provide an actively used collection that actually will meet the needs of the public. Outdated and unused items reduce library use and cost space and money to house. We believe it is essential for the library to aggressively address the decline in its collection budget.

**Hours of Service.** *The library is generally not open the days and hours that the public should expect in communities of comparable size. This is another factor in the decline in library use. We compared all three branch libraries to those in other Wyoming cities using U.S. Census Bureau 2014 population estimates. We were concerned with two questions: How does the library compare in hours and days of service per week to libraries in cities of comparable size, and how does the number of days the library is open compare with libraries with comparable total hours of service?*

The Evanston Library was compared to cities with populations of 7,500 to 17,000 as well as a few county library headquarters in town of 4,500 to 7,500. The average weekly hours of service in those libraries were 53, compared to the 43 for Evanston. Only one library had fewer hours of service. Similarly, every other library in this comparison was open a minimum of six days per week. In both hours and days of service the Evanston library is at the very bottom in comparison with similar libraries. We also compared the days the library is open to other libraries open 40-50 hours per week. With only one exception those libraries are open six days per week, although located in much smaller communities.

The Lyman library is open 30 hours per week, compared to an average of 41 for comparable libraries. Almost every other library with similar hours is open 5 or 6 days per week.

The Mountain View library is open 34 hours per week, which is the average for comparable communities. However that group includes two county library headquarter libraries. If those are excluded Mountain View's hours are above average for similar branch libraries. Every Wyoming library outside of Uinta County with comparable hours of service is open at least 5 days per week.

There are some inescapable conclusions:

1. Both the Evanston and Lyman libraries do not compare well with comparable cities.
2. The Mountain View branch library is open relatively good hours, and in fact more hours than the Lyman branch library.
3. None of the libraries seem to be offering optimum hours for the needs of the community, and all of them should be able to open another day per week within current hours. Other libraries tend to use more variation of hours in order to be open more days and better meet community needs.

## 2. Significant Operational issues

**Funding:** *The most fundamental problem that will continue to prevent the library from providing adequate library services is the lack of sufficient public funding to provide basic library service in the system's three branch libraries.* In the long term, the library will not be able to resolve some of the problems identified in this report without increased funding. At the minimum the library budget needs an additional \$25,000 for the library collection and funding for a reasonable pay increase for library employees. We are aware that the county has long followed a policy of levying a 1.0 mill tax for the library. However, that levy rate may be changed at any time, and many Wyoming counties do levy at a higher rate. In addition some counties partially fund the county library from the county general fund. The per capita support for the library ranks 18<sup>th</sup> among the 23 Wyoming county libraries.

**Foundation and Friends of the Library:** *The Library Foundation has had a notable success in developing the library endowment fund but is having a difficult time in taking the next steps forward.* There appears to be substantial potential for major community fundraising, and there are individuals who would be valuable additions to the Foundation board. The foundation needs to pursue continued fundraising much more aggressively. We observe two other issues. The Foundation is providing substantial funds for purchase of library materials. However, it should not be the role of the Foundation to provide the basic costs of operating the library. The endowment and other foundation funds should be used for major projects and to enable the library to accomplish services beyond basic operations. Second, the inability to make the Friends of the Library become an actual and flourishing organization is a serious problem. Library staff are spending time on basic fundraising efforts that should be performed by the Friends of the Library. The Friends of the Library should assume that responsibility in the future. Library employees cannot afford to assign staff for that purpose without suffering even greater reductions in staffing of library services.

**Library planning and priorities.** *The library board does not have a clear vision of the library service it wants to attain in the future, and a set of priorities to attain that vision.* We believe this is greatest need other than reaching an adequate level of funding. Even a very well funded library cannot do all things well, much less a library with the financial challenges of Uinta County. The library needs to identify its priorities and move forcefully to allocate adequate resources to those priorities (even if that result is contrary to specific recommendations in this report). Meaningful and ongoing planning for library improvement is of critical importance. Those decisions can only appropriately made through such a planning process. We do not attempt to suggest what priorities the library should select. In our opinion the library board is committed to library improvement and ready to take on this planning process.

**County Library and branch libraries.** *The county library needs to be viewed and administered as a single library with several service locations not as three separate libraries.* We noted a number of comments in which it was apparent that some staff and members of the public see the interests of their branch library in conflict with that of the other libraries or the system as a whole. The county library should be striving for a consistent and unified library experience throughout the county. We do want to point out the absolute importance of maintaining correct channels of communication with the library board determining policy and supporting the library director's responsibility to make all management level decisions and to be the communication link between the board and library staff.

**Lyman and Mountain View Libraries.** *In answer to a serious concern, we do not recommend closing any branch libraries at this time.* It is always difficult to close a long established branch library. However, we want to be clear that the library cannot operate three branches with adequate service hours within its current budget. Those branches can only remain open with less than ideal hours and staffing, and some significant changes are needed if the system is to continue its three-branch organization. Those will be addressed in the recommendations portion of this report. If changes are not made in all library branches, or if the county library is unsuccessful in addressing its problems through other means, this issue should be reconsidered in the future. Obviously the Lyman branch library operates in a rather different manner than do the other libraries. There are valid arguments for and against its bookstore style nonfiction arrangement but there is undeniably a different user experience in this library than in the others. We have never seen a library with the degree of fiction categorization used in Lyman and found it confusing. The Lyman library is outstanding in its use of book display, and that should be emulated in the other libraries. Finally we want to point out that the Mountain View library has more staff and slightly longer hours of service despite having both a local population and library circulation only equal to about 60% of that of the Lyman library. Comments that the Mountain View library has greater per capita use are not supported by current circulation statistics, although that was true five years ago. We suspect that change is significantly due to the closure of the school adjacent to the Mountain View library. We should mention that the population of Mountain View is gradually increasing.

**Library Staffing.** *We believe there are significant staffing issues, due in part to the library's financial limitations.* We found the library staff to be skilled and exceptionally dedicated to the library. However, we have several concerns:

- Library employees have not received a pay increase in seven years. The library budget is essentially being kept in balance on the shoulders of its employees. Quite aside from the current morale and fairness issues, the library will find it increasingly difficult to replace staff with qualified people in the future under these circumstances.
- Eighty per cent of the library budget is allocated to personnel costs, with virtually no budget for library materials. That is an imbalance that cannot continue. We believe that there is no alternative to staff reductions if the library's income remains at its current levels. Such reductions will have an impact on service, although there may be ways to lessen that impact.

- The library staff is relatively small, ranking 17<sup>th</sup> in staff per capita among Wyoming libraries, and substantial reductions were made in 2016. Certainly the library is not overstaffed. However, the current staffing is only .9 FTE less than in the years 2011-2014. We point out our comparison with a peer library in Bonner Springs, Kansas that is operating 64 hours and seven days per week, circulating substantially more items, with a staff similar in size to the Evanston library.
- Staff in some public service areas have difficulty coping with staff absences, and are compartmentalized in a manner that reduces flexibility in moving staff to points of service need and leads to considerable stress in adequately staffing the circulation department. Based on our examination of other libraries, we believe it really should be possible to operate the library its current hours with a smaller staff (or more hours with the current staff), but only with some fundamental reorganization. The library must face the fact that it will have only the staff of a small library for the foreseeable future, and must be organized accordingly.

**Community Involvement.** *The Evanston library and the county library as a whole need to improve its community involvement. Our impression is that the Lyman and Mountain View libraries may possibly be more successful in that regard.* We believe that the library board wants the library to be an active center for community activities and programs. However comments in the public forum clearly indicated that the Evanston library is not seen as such. Both the level of effort in inviting public programming, and the dated and drab meeting facilities in Evanston need to be improved. If the library board really chooses the community center role as a major priority it will have to allocate resources to support that. We wonder if the fees charged for use of library meeting rooms discourage use.

**Services and Procedures.** *Library services need to be significantly streamlined and simplified.* We believe that in some cases “the great is the enemy of the good” in library operations. Every unnecessary procedure needs to be eliminated if it does not result in improved service. We offer a few points as examples:

1. All items being added to the collection are double checked by circulation and children’s department staff to catch what is a very small rate of errors. We do not believe it is worth the staff time.
2. Circulation staff in Evanston have to retrieve audiovisual materials from the workroom, involving substantial extra time. There is no longer a significant difference in cost between a hardbound book and a DVD movie that would justify the staff cost for this arrangement. Many libraries put those materials in the open for the public to retrieve, accepting that there will be a percentage of stolen items.
3. The FAX machine in Evanston is located so as to require a staff member to leave the circulation desk for an extended period to send a long FAX. There is no reason that equipment could not be at the circulation desk.
4. The different processing done at different branches is inefficient and time consuming and results in inconsistent user experience. Processing should be consistent throughout the system whether performed centrally or at each branch.



We believe that the Evanston library cannot operate with multiple public service points within its current budget, and still have sufficient resources for collections and services. We will address that in our recommendations. We also suggest that if young adult services are a priority a greatly improved young adult area is needed.

**Evanston Building.** *Significant changes are needed in the Evanston library building, both short-term and long-term.* The building is certainly an adequate and reasonably attractive one for a library but in its current state it suffers from limitations that hamper both efficiency and public service. Some of those problems can be rather easily addressed but others will require major renovation. Entering the library we particularly notice the large visual barrier created by the staircase to the mezzanine level, the large array of plants, and the reference desk and collection. Second, we notice that the circulation desk is far removed from the entrance, and that there is very little display of library materials. In a properly designed library the circulation counter would be near the entrance with the workroom adjacent to it. A number of library areas are in former offices that cannot be efficiently used. The meeting rooms are rather dated and unattractive (in contrast to the very good meeting spaces in the other branch libraries). In general the library has a rather unexciting appearance. A great deal could be done at very little cost to make it more attractive and interesting. We believe that the existing library space could be better utilized with the necessary weeding of outdated materials from the library collection. We wonder if the large piano could be moved to a more compact space when not in use. It is certainly part of the ambience of the building but it is a significant space that is rarely used. We will address these issues further in the recommendations section.

## Recommendations

We believe that the library can respond successfully to the serious problems it is facing. However there is no easy way to break a pattern of decline. We suggest a number of steps to do so, some of which are difficult and painful, and the library board and administration must be prepared to face that if it is to move forward to strengthen library service. It is our impression that the library has perhaps hesitated to address some issues it was already aware of. We encourage the library to consider our recommendations and take action. Some of our recommendations can be implemented immediately and others are suggested to guide longer-term library improvement. The recommendations address the questions posed in this study:

How can library funding be improved to support strong library service?

How can library operations be made more efficient?

How can library programs and priorities be altered to provide the most effective use of existing resources?

*Resolve the gap in library funding.*

1. The library board and administration should work with the county commission to achieve sufficient funding for adequate basic library operations. This will not be achieved immediately but is essential in the long run. There is no avoiding the fact that many of the issues addressed in this report are due to an inadequate library budget. We encourage flexibility about exactly how improved library funding might be structured. The library should be transparent in informing the public that the library will eventually face more severe service reductions if the current level of funding cannot be improved.
2. The foundation should enlarge its board by filling available positions with individuals who are committed to working actively to seek community funding. We believe that some of those attending the public forum were exactly the type of person who should be recruited. The foundation may also wish to recruit an “honorary foundation board” of influential citizens who would lend their names to the foundation’s fundraising efforts.
3. The library foundation needs to build on its success in creating the library endowment by aggressively pursuing private funding sources to supplement tax funding. With an enlarged foundation board, a committee could be formed to work with the Wyoming Community Foundation and other resources to seek funding both for the endowment fund, and for a separate fund to support major projects.
4. The foundation should reimburse the library for the hours the library business manager is working on management of foundation financial accounts in order to permit that employee to provide better service to the library.

5. The foundation board should form a strong and active Friends of the Library group as quickly as possible. The delays in that process have already resulted in some public skepticism about the foundation and the friends group. The Friends of the Library should be tasked with recruiting a strong group of volunteers who are able to assume management of routine fund raising efforts, including book sales. We recognize the library staff belief that volunteers are not able to do the required sorting and other book sale processes, but we are familiar with many Friends groups in other libraries who do so very successfully. We suggest that the Friends, once established, particularly recruit retired teachers and other professionals for these projects. The library staff cannot afford to continue to operate the book sales and other fundraising programs. It is expected that there will be close coordination between the library administration and the Friends organization.

*Modify and improve library services and operations.*

6. The library board should undertake a strategic planning process intended to create mission and vision statements that lay out the library’s vision for library service, establish a limited set of primary service roles and priorities, and set goals and objectives to support those priorities. We strongly encourage the library board to seek excellence in its selected priorities even at the cost of deemphasizing or eliminating some other services. We suggest that the board use a facilitator to assist with that planning process and involve community members and library staff in the planning process. We also suggest that this be a continuous process that will be reviewed and revised every 2-3 years. The board may choose to first implement some of the recommendations in this report, but should conduct this planning process as soon as possible.
7. The library must allocate sufficient funding to keep collections current. We believe this is so important that we can only recommend maintaining the current branch libraries and services if it is accomplished. We recommend that the library allocate a minimum of 4% of its budget for collection purchases, either immediately or in the 2017-18 budget at the very latest. However, that is only a first step, and we further recommend that allocation be increased to 8% as rapidly as possible. That, along with a modest annual contribution from the foundation endowment fund, would provide a reasonably adequate materials budget, although not an exceptional one. Failure to achieve this will ensure continued decline in library use. A rather small increase in library funding of approximately \$25,000-30,000, in combination with the cost savings proposed in this report, would enable the library to achieve that 8% goal.
8. Due to the long term neglect of the collection the library should undertake a major “weeding” program to remove materials that are outdated, in poor physical condition, or of no interest to library users. This will result in smaller, more actively used library collections. These outdated materials are not assets to the library, they are liabilities that convey to users the idea that the library itself is outdated and of poor quality. A well-weeded collection is more attractive and will also provide more space within the

building for other uses. Almost all of the print reference collection should be removed as part of this process. We recommend that the library use *CREW: a Weeding Manual for Modern Libraries* for this purpose, available at <https://www.tsl.texas.gov/ld/pubs/crew/index.html>

9. Significantly revise service hours to improve access. We do not believe that library service hours are currently designed to provide optimum service. The libraries currently are open for approximately eight-hour days, but fewer days per week than other comparable libraries. In our opinion there is no reason for a branch with a full-time manager to be open less than five days per week. The library administration will need to assess the hours in which there are the highest library visits but we suggest these possible steps:
  - a. Open the Evanston library for service on Mondays by changing opening hours to no earlier than 10:00am, rather than the current 9:00a.m. and consider opening as late as noon on one or more days of the week. It would be much better to have one or two days on which the library is open only afternoon and evening hours than to close entirely on a weekday. No other comparable Wyoming library is open less than six days per week. Although increased service hours are very much needed we do not recommend a change in the total hours of service at this time. We do suggest that after the library 's operations are reorganized it reconsider whether it can increase its hours of service.
  - b. Open the Lyman and Mountain View libraries an equal number of hours per week. We believe that equal number will need to be a modest reduction from the current staffing and total hours of service of those libraries in order to keep both of them open. With revised hours they should be open five days per week. We recommend that those branches be open for morning hours only on days when children's story hours are offered. These are the *minimum* changes we can recommend in library hours. If the library is not able to resolve its fiscal challenges, it should be prepared to consider further reduction in hours, with a single shared branch manager responsible for both of these branch libraries. That would be a last resort to keep both branches open and we are not recommending it *at this time*. For now, we hope that a reallocation of hours can sustain or improve public access to the Lyman and Mountain View branches.
  - c. It is a concern that there is no library available on Saturday in the Bridger Valley area. We are aware that the branch librarians believe that there is little public use on Saturday. We recommend that the library administration seriously consider and determine whether to open one of those branch libraries on Saturday.
  
10. The library should eliminate separation among departments in the Evanston library with all staff sharing tasks and functioning under the coordination of a branch manager. That branch manager will be responsible for ensuring that the library functions as a unified service. We want to be clear that we are suggesting totally eliminating most departmental barriers and moving staff to the point of service need at any given time. Some of the implications of this recommendation are:

- All staff should be trained to work at the circulation desk, and should work regular shifts there. Whenever there is a staff shortage it should be “all hands on deck” with all staff available to work at the circulation desk.
  - Circulation procedures should be simplified to the maximum reasonable extent.
  - Physical processing of new materials should be shared among staff. There is no reason that circulation staff cannot perform that activity at the circulation desk during periods of low activity. We have recently visited libraries that are in fact sharing processing tasks in this manner.
  - There are some modifications to this general principal. The children’s department is in a separate location and is separately staffed. However even staff in that department should work some shifts on the circulation desk. We suggest that in the event of a building renovation the children’s department should be relocated in the general service area to facilitate staff sharing. We have visited a number of modern libraries in comparable communities and most of them did not have a separate children’s room. The cataloger is probably needed solely in that part-time position, although she should be prepared to work in circulation when the need arises due to staff shortages. The business manager and IT coordinator are also in specialized positions but do some work on public service desks. Everyone else on staff, from the library director on down, should be working regular desk shifts.
11. The Evanston Library circulation counter should be relocated near the library entrance as the only adult public service point. This is an opportunity to easily welcome the public as they enter the library, and to provide better visual control. We have discussed with the library director the feasibility of relocation to the current periodicals area, and consider that an excellent location. Because the circulation area and the staff work room would be physically separated, the library culture must change so that staff regularly call for assistance as needed. We repeat that the current circulation and adult services departments will become a single public services team despite separate locations.
  12. The library cannot afford to maintain two adult service points. The separate reference desk should be eliminated. We suggest that there be a location at the circulation desk clearly indicated as “Information” where reference questions would be responded to, but staff working at that location would also be performing circulation duties. This may also free staff to roam the library and proactively assist patrons.
  13. In the long run the library should seriously consider the use of self-check technology that will allow patrons to check items out themselves. This would provide major staff savings, and would shift emphasis to an information/welcome desk or kiosk. The danger to be avoided would be any appearance that the library is not actively welcoming and assisting visitors.

14. The FAX machine in Evanston should be replaced with a new one located directly at the circulation desk to minimize absences from the circulation counter. We also recommend that the library set a limit on the length of documents that will be sent and refer customers with long documents to a nearby commercial FAX service.
  
15. The audiovisual collection should be removed from the workroom and displayed in the area now occupied by the circulation counter. Items should be in ordinary cases and directly browsed by customers in the same manner as the book collection. This will save substantial staff time. While there will be some theft of materials that is already the case with the book collection. An image of open audiovisual shelving from a public library is provided in Appendix 5.
  
16. Circulation and children's staff should cease double-checking the cataloging of new materials, given the relatively low rate of errors.
  
17. The collection should be consistently processed and organized in all libraries to provide a similar user experience. We have discussed this issue at length with the library director after observing all three libraries. It is our considered opinion that:
  - Adult nonfiction collection should be organized according to the usual Dewey Decimal system. There is nothing inherently wrong with a bookstore arrangement approach but it is fundamentally different and we believe the county library should operate in a uniform manner. The only reasonable alternative (which we do not recommend) is converting all branches to a uniform "bookstore" shelving system.
  - Fiction should be organized alphabetically by author. Libraries generally take one of two approaches to fiction genres: either they are organized in separate sections (romance, science fiction, etc.) or they are in the general fiction arrangement with spine labels indicating genres. Either of those is perfectly effective, although we recommend that the library adopt one approach or the other. However, we have never seen another library with a fiction collection divided into as many categories as the Lyman library and suggest a more conventional approach.
  - It should be feasible for the branch libraries to do physical processing (book jackets and spine labels). However we noted in our library visits that they were experiencing delays in processing items in order to get them on the shelf. Library administration should determine whether it is more efficient to do processing of all materials centrally or separately in each branch, but in either case processing should be consistent.
  - All branches should strongly emphasize book display and merchandising. Some of the display techniques at the Lyman library are worth imitating throughout the system, and the libraries may wish to use separate displays for a limited number of topics. We found display to be notably lacking at the Evanston library. Recommendations in this report should permit greatly expanded display in that library, which in itself will increase library circulation. This will be addressed further below.

18. The library will need to reduce staffing in order to adequately function within current resources. This is a difficult and painful recommendation. However the unavoidable arithmetic is that the library cannot continue to have virtually no materials budget and spend 80% of its budget on personnel. The library needs \$25,000 just to meet the first goal of a 4% materials budget. Library administration should first determine if any savings are possible in its miscellaneous operating expenses, and will then have to implement staffing reductions as needed to free the remaining needed funds. It will be up to the library director to make specific decisions, but we will point out some general areas for staff cutbacks. All libraries will have to share in these reductions. It is simply not practical or fair to attempt to impose all staff reductions in a single library. We suggest that with modest reductions in service hours the Lyman and Mountain View libraries can each operate with a staff of 1.25 to 1.5 FTE staff. We have worked with many libraries in communities of similar size that are operating with that staffing level while open more hours and performing many functions that in Uinta County are provided by the Evanston headquarters library.

In Evanston, there are currently four staff departments: children’s services, circulation, adult services (reference and technical services), and administration and support services (including the business manager and IT librarian. The children’s services program is fairly strong and relatively well staffed. *Provided that children’s staff work regular shifts in circulation as recommended in this report*, we suggest no changes in that staff. The remaining staff reductions will probably need to be from the merged circulation and adult services departments. Depending on which position or positions are eliminated, a reduction of .5 to 1.0 FTE should be sufficient to free the needed funds. We believe that the changes in operations and services that we have suggested will allow the library to function effectively despite that staff reduction. A 4% materials budget is not the ultimate goal. In time that percentage should be increased to at least 8%. It is our hope that the library can increase its total funding sufficiently to afford that materials budget without taking more drastic measures in regard to staffing.

Staff reduction is always a difficult process. We recommend that immediately after the library board accepts this recommendation, the library director conduct individual interviews with every employee and discuss their comfort with the new directions the library will be taking, and their personal and employment plans. Hopefully the staff affected by reductions can be those who will be least harmed or who are least critical to the library’s success. If it is not possible to reduce staff immediately it should certainly be completed during the next year. Funds cannot be redirected to materials purchases until staff cuts occur, and there may be further delay to accommodate termination leave payouts.

19. Library salaries must be improved. It is unacceptable to keep salaries permanently frozen. That simply disguises the library's financial situation by penalizing an excellent library staff and setting the stage for future turnover and hiring problems. We recommend that a salary increase be provided in the 2017-2018 budget. We hope that the library can achieve that through a budget increase. *This problem must be addressed even if it means opening the libraries one hour less per week in order to afford a pay raise.*
20. Significant changes are needed in the Evanston library building. The building is sound and reasonably attractive, but it is not well organized for dynamic library service, and it requires a number of changes to effectively utilize all spaces in the building. Our recommendations are in two categories:

*Building reorganization that can be accomplished now or in the near future.*

The library circulation counter should be moved to the current periodicals area. After discussion with the library director, we believe a part of the current circulation counter could be repurposed to fit this location. We encourage use of a local craftsman to make the new circulation counter as attractive as possible; this will be the only adult public service point and visitors will pass directly by it when entering the library. Reference/information service will also be provided from this location.

The reference desk and print reference collection should be removed, opening up that area for other use. Reference staff may retain some items for ready reference use. Book display should be drastically expanded and improved. An emphasis on display and merchandising will increase circulation even without an increase in new materials. Library visitors should pass directly by display shelving as they enter the library. Therefore display shelving should be located along the face of the area now devoted to the reference department, and also along the area with the large plant display. We suggest that the plants could be dispersed throughout the library so that part of that space could be devoted to display. Additional smaller displays should be placed throughout the library. The building does not look as if the collection is being actively merchandised. Get materials out of the stacks and in face out displays as much as possible.

Audiovisual materials (cassettes, CD's and DVD's) should be placed on shelving in the area now occupied by the circulation department. They should be in their ordinary cases so library users can browse them and take them to the circulation desk for checkout without staff intervention.

As outdated items are removed from the collection and the collection decreases in size, there will be an opportunity for more flexibility in use of library space and display on the shelves.



The two meeting rooms in the Evanston library should be renovated. Some of those in attendance at the public forum made rather strong comments about how drab and unpleasant they found the meeting room to be. If, as some library board members suggested, the library's role as a community activity center is an important one, then its meeting spaces need to be places where people actually want to be. In contrast we considered the meeting rooms in the Lyman and Mountain View libraries to be very attractive and well equipped. We suggest that the library pursue grants or other private funding to renovate and upgrade its meeting rooms as soon as possible.

The library needs a much better young adult area. We suggest that as space becomes available attention be paid to creating a more interesting and adequate young adult area. We do not recommend any separate staffing for that area.

*Major building renovation*

We recommend a major long-term building renovation project that will undoubtedly take a number of years to accomplish. We suggest that the library seek both an initiative for a special sales tax district for capital purposes, and private fund raising to make the greatest possible use of the building. Some of the recommended building changes are:

Remove all unnecessary barriers to allow optimum use of floor space.

Examine whether removal of the mezzanine level or relocation of the stairs to the mezzanine level is practical. The current stairway is a major barrier to library visibility and space utilization. If any changes are made to the mezzanine level, the library would need to install a small elevator to meet Americans With Disabilities Act standards. If access to the mezzanine is not improved we point out that the library faces legal risks if a qualified person with a disability applies for an administrative position.

Relocate the children's area in the main library area. That is the common practice for most modern single-level libraries.

Bring the circulation area and staff work room together in a location near the front entrance.

Renovate and possibly expand meeting spaces if that has not been adequately accomplished prior to the renovation.

If the library chooses to adopt self-check/RFID technology to reduce staff time and improve security, the equipment for that should be included in the renovation project.

We recognize that these recommendations represent significant suggestions for change. We are confident in the ability and resolve of the library board and director to make choices that will strengthen library service, and in the dedication of the library staff to adapt to change. We believe there is genuinely strong support in the community for the library to pursue excellence.

**Appendix 1: Rankings and Comments**

Of 23 Wyoming county libraries, the Uinta County Library ranks:

18<sup>th</sup> in staff FTE's per capita

19<sup>th</sup> in staff expenditures per capita

23<sup>rd</sup> in collection expenditures

21<sup>st</sup> in total operating expenditures per capita

16<sup>th</sup> in public access computers per capita

9<sup>th</sup> in program attendance per capita

11<sup>th</sup> in circulation per capita but the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest reduction in circulation in the past 5 years.

In the 5 years from 2011 to 2015 the library has:

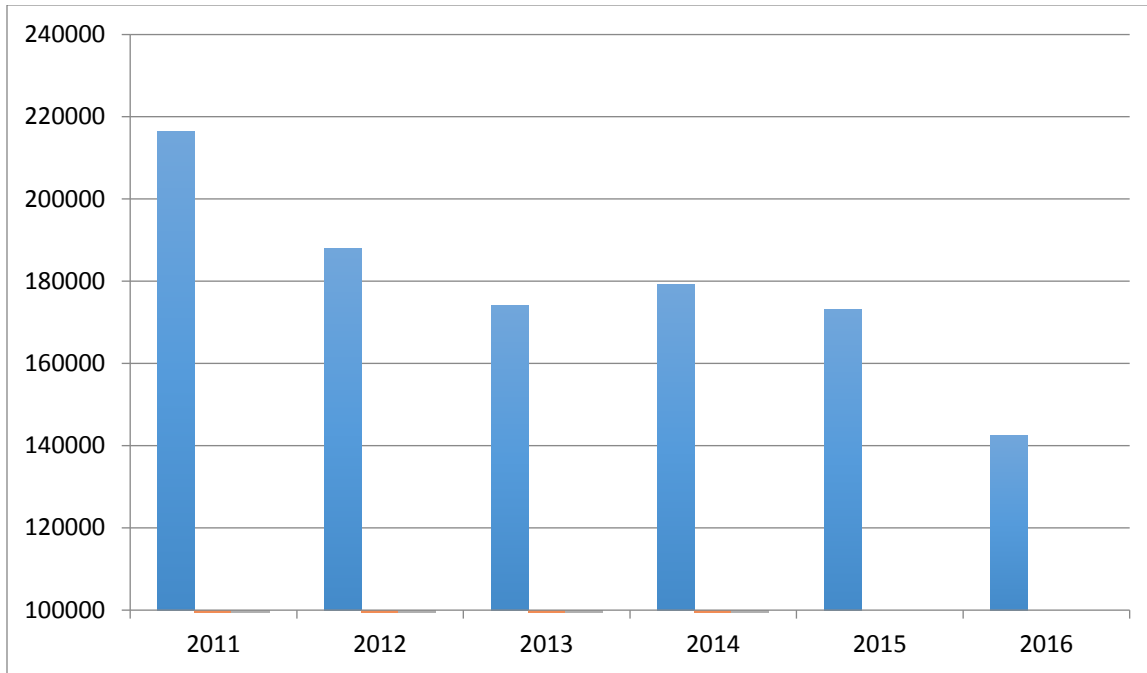
Reduced service by 26 hours per week. The Evanston library is open 9 hours less, and the Lyman library open 10 hours less, than comparable communities.

Reduced circulation of library materials by 19.99% compared to 4.95% for all libraries.

Reduced library visits by 34%

The library's rate of acquisition of new materials is 1.24%. At that rate it will take more than 70 years for the library to replace its collection (equivalent to the period from the end of World War II till now). That means that the collection will be increasingly full of out-of-date materials that the public will be uninterested in. This is directly responsible for the plunging circulation rate. (In addition a majority of the new additions are items donated by the public and not selected by the library.)

### Appendix 2: Six-Year Circulation Loss



**Appendix 3: Days and Hours of Weekly Service Comparison**

Library	City Population	Hours Open	Days Open Per Week
Evanston	12,133	43	5
Cody	9,792	59.5	7
Green River	12,465	58	6
Jackson	10,523	57.5	6
Riverton	10,873	56	6
Sheridan	17,983	56	6
Rawlins	9,040	35	6
Lander	7,686	56	6
Douglas	6,531	54	6
Worland	5,372	51	6
<b>Average</b>		53	6
Lyman	2,074	30	4
Saratoga	1,677	26	4
Afton	1,972	48	6
Wright	1,862	48	6
Glenrock	2,598	44	6
Lovell	2,422	39	6
Greybull	1,879	30	5
Wilson	1,846	48	6
<b>Average</b>		39	5
Mountain View	1,294	34	4
Basin	1,305	41	6
Sundance	1,272	40	5
Pine Bluffs	1,146	30	5
Upton	1,109	27.5	5
Moorcroft	1,062	37.5	5
Dubois	987	30	4
Ranchester	940	35	5
<b>Average</b>		34	5

**Appendix 4: Evanston Peer Library Comparison**

We are comparing the staffing and hours of service of the Evanston Library with three other libraries. We are using two Wyoming libraries, one with less total hours of weekly service and one with more hours, to demonstrate how the Evanston library could choose to be open six days per week. However, our principal comparison is with the Bonner Springs, Kansas Library. We have selected that library because it is similar in service population and total staff size to the Evanston Library, (but with significantly higher circulation and weekly service hours), and because we were able to closely examine the exact staffing, service hours and operations of that library.

However, there are some differences that should be stated. The Bonner Springs library operates in a modern and efficient single-level building with all service areas easily supervised from the circulation desk. Their children’s services program is very strong with both a Youth/Teen Librarian and an Early Childhood Literacy Specialist.

Evanston	Fremont, WY	Rawlins, WY	Bonner Springs, KS
Circulation: 87,645	Circulation: 90744	Circulation: 58,501	Circulation: 144,936
Collection: 87,610	Collection: 51,646	Collection: 64,006	Collection: 86,654

Hours

Monday:	Closed	10:00-9:00	10:00-6:00	9:00-8:00
Tuesday:	9:00-7:00	10:00-9:00	10:00-6:00	9:00-8:00
Wed.:	9:00-7:00	10:00-9:00	10:00-2:00	9:00-8:00
Thurs.:	9:00-7:00	10:00-9:00	1:00-7:00	9:00-8:00
Friday	9:00-4:00	10:00-4:00	1:00-5:00	9:00-5:00
Saturday	10:00-4:00	10:00-4:00	10:00-2:00	9:00-5:00
Sunday	Closed	Closed	Closed	1:00-5:00
Total hours	43	56	34	64
Staff	8.7 FTE	30.3 FTE (all branches)	14.10 FTE (all branches)	8.53 FTE

**Evanston Peer Library comparison**

Library Staff Positions

Evanston

Bonner Springs, KS

Director

Director

Assistant Director/cataloger

Business Manger

IT Librarian

Technology Coordinator

Children's Librarian

Youth and Teen Librarian

Adult Services Librarian

Early Childhood Coordinator

Circulation Librarian

Circulation Coordinator

Children's Assistant

Story Time Assistant

Circulation Assistants (4)

Circulation Assistants (3)

Cataloging Assistant

Processing Assistant

Acquisitions Assistant

Shelving Assistant

**Appendix 5: Open Audiovisual Display**

