

Survey indicates customers appreciate library services

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Results of a Santa Cruz City-County Public Library Board questionnaire show that library patrons appreciate their libraries and are as fond of the librarians and the atmosphere as they are of the books themselves.

Library Trustee Eleanor Engstrand gave the board a summary of the questionnaire at its regular board session on Monday. The survey was

distributed this winter at the central library and the branches, and more than 500 library users responded.

Mrs. Engstrand noted that those who filled out the form are most likely the library's best supporters. She also said the survey itself is far from scientific, since patrons may have received encouragement at one branch and not at another, and the questions may have been a bit leading.

"However, a clear

impression comes through that the service offered by the library is highly valued and some ways in which it could be approved are suggested," she said.

Asked what they liked best about the libraries, 127 persons said they enjoyed the librarians the most, and these were described as "friendly, helpful and knowledgeable." The books, the buildings and the atmosphere were also mentioned.

Choices were given for ways

to save money, and 168 persons said they favor a greater use of volunteers if the budget must receive further cuts. A reduction in library hours was the choice of 91 patrons, while 87 approved closing the branches of lowest circulation. Only 26 library users supported cuts to the book budget.

"Many were not willing to accept any of these options," Mrs. Engstrand said.

Alternatives proposed by the respondents were varied,

ranging from an annual fee use for library services to applications for grants. Others suggested fundraising events, a tax override, collection of larger donations, increased fines for overdue books and charges for library cards.

To save money, some suggested cutting hours, reducing salaries, cutbacks in staff, and finally, "remove non-functional board members." The last comment drew chuckles from trustees,

since they receive no pay for their service on the board.

A question about what patrons would like to change in the library produced a wide range of individual responses. Many would like to see the libraries open on Sunday. Others want "more of everything." A majority wanted more books and periodicals of varying types, and a list of desired equipment was also provided. Some wanted their libraries to be quieter, a few asked staff to be

more friendly and a few others wanted the central library "to stop paging librarians."

Technical suggestions were also offered. Patrons wanted changes in the filing system for records and certain kinds of books, for example, or suggested displays of relevant books from which patrons would borrow.

One fan of the library book sale complained that book dealers always seem to get the best editions before the public arrives.

General fiction heads the list of the kinds of books people like the best. Best sellers, current fiction, non-fiction, current affairs and "how-to," books were followed by those who enjoy records, magazines and newspapers.

In general, the 500 respondents said they come to the library for a particular book or information on a particular topic. They also come to "see what's new and interesting."

Library fines