

SC City, county reach crossroads over library funds

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Libraries - 1980-1989
Santa Cruz County supervisors want more library services in the unincorporated parts of the county and have threatened to pull out of the City-County Library System if they don't get their way.

The library budget the supervisors adopted yesterday reflects their top priority, but doesn't promise the supervisors will get their wish.

The supervisors' priority contrasts with those of Santa Cruz City officials, and the administrators and Board of Directors of the City-County Library System, who want to see more money spent on books.

The conflict will now go before a special reconciliation committee appointed by the City Council and Board of Supervisors to resolve differences in the jurisdictions' joint-operating agreement for library services.

There may be more at stake, however, than next year's library budget.

Live Oak-Soquel Supervisor Dan Forbus and Aptos-Capitola Supervisor Robley Levy stated yesterday that the county may have come to a crossroads with the city. They said it might be in the best interest of the county to pull out of the joint-operating agreement unless services to outlying areas are improved.

The 30-year joint-operating agreement has seven more years to run, but city and county officials have agreed to renegotiate the document next year. The negotiations are intended to resolve the long-standing feeling that while the county supplies two-thirds of the library budget, it comes out short on services.

In a 4-1 vote, with Santa Cruz-area Supervisor Gary Patton dissenting, the supervisors allocated \$103,000 to establish a small "store-front" branch library in Live Oak, part-time staffing at an all-volunteer library in La Selva Beach and \$206,502 for books and periodicals.

The allocations are the first step toward fulfilling a long-range plan for library services presented to the supervisors by County Administrative Officer George Newell. The long-range plan would allow the

county to extend and expand services in Live Oak, Capitola, Soquel, La Selva Beach and the Freedom area by 1997.

The plan also provides more money for book acquisitions; the amounts rise each year as the library system pays off debts accrued through the construction of the Boulder Creek

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Library, acquisition of the Branciforte Library, installation of a computerized check-out system and replacement of the carpet for the Central Branch.

Newell's budget, which begins with a \$206,502 allocation for books in the coming fiscal year, steadily increases that allocation until it reaches \$752,160 in the 2,000-2,001 fiscal year.

In all, the supervisors approved allocating \$1.7 million dollars to the library in the coming fiscal year. The county's contribution, approximately two-thirds of the total library budget, is based on circulation in unincorporated parts of the county.

Hal Morris, chairman of the library board, sharply criticized Newell's budget. He described Newell's budget as a "private revised long-range plan" because it differed from the long-range plan devised by the library staff and a citizens committee.

Newell's plan would foster small branches with inappropriately short hours and thin book collections, Morris said.

Morris urged the board to use its money to improve library services next year, not to fund "a hastily drawn and poorly formulated plan that is yet to receive professional library staff analysis and your Library System Board's citizen review."