

Watsonville librarian heads to Wyoming

Hurley seeks wide open spaces

By **MARIANNE BIASOTTI**

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WATSONVILLE — For the past seven years, she's run one of the most efficient libraries in the county.

That's been no easy task for Vivian Hurley, head of the Watsonville Public Library. But that task will no longer be hers.

Hurley is packing up next week to become head librarian in Rock Springs, a city in southwestern Wyoming.

Hurley said this week her reasons for leaving are more personal than professional. A native Texan, she wants to return to the sunny, wide-open spaces she's missed since moving to the foggy Central California coast.

But she'll find one thing in both places. Library patrons.

Personal contact with the public has always been her top priority, she said. In fact, she was ready to turn down the job in Rock Springs if she could not work the reference desk and deal directly with people.

"That's where I learn what people want," she explained.

Hurley said she also enjoys cataloging books and selecting materials for the library purchases for its collection.

But those traditional tasks are becoming increasingly uncommon for many library directors today, Hurley

added. Dwindling state and local revenues have shrunk library budgets, and public support appears exhausted. Voters rejected last year's Measure L, which would have taxed people to raise money which was to go to libraries.

After 26 years in the information business, Hurley said the technological revolution has completely changed the librarian's role. During her tenure, Hurley helped install the library's updated computer system. It has enabled the branch to trade materials with libraries in Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito counties.

Even with one foot out the door, Hurley still has lingering concerns for the library she leaves behind. Financial survival.

Local officials lauded Hurley for her fund-raising.

"Vivian has had to deal with budget cuts ... but her library has done a lot better than many libraries in the state have done," said Dan Haifley, county library advocate and aide to Sen. Henry Mello. "Part of that is that she's been a good advocate of libraries in her city government."

Another part, he added, is Watsonville didn't suffer as the county did from the loss of state special district money that went to libraries after the passage of Proposition 13.



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel file

Vivian Hurley says she remains concerned about the financial health of California libraries.

Hurley said her successor's biggest challenge will be expanding the library — which includes building a Freedom branch — and increasing a trust fund Hurley began in 1993 she hopes will eventually support the library's \$100,000 annual book and materials fund.

Hurley said she wishes she could have stayed to introduce the next "technological leap" she had planned for the Watsonville library. Hurley envisions a library of CD-ROM discs, complete with sound systems, can open up a new world to those who best absorb knowledge through images rather than words.

"That's the next challenge for libraries in general," Hurley said. "It's for people with the artistic mind ... and it's going to be a wonderful time for them."