



City and Borough of Sitka

100 Lincoln Street Sitka, Alaska 99835

Coast Guard City, USA

STAFF MEMORANDUM

Date: May 2, 2016

To: Mayor McConnell and Members of the Assembly
Mark Gorman, Administrator

From: Robb Farmer, Library Director

Subject: Follow-up Report on the Effects of Joining the Alaska Joint Library Consortium

BACKGROUND

Last June, our library completed a move to become part of the Alaska Joint Library Consortium, a growing coalition of libraries that presently reaches nearly 2/3 of the state's library users. This move was taken to facilitate the following benefits to the City & Borough of Sitka:

- Elimination of a physical catalog server in Sitka, thereby conserving space and staff time;
- Sharing costs for the electronic catalog service and maintenance among all Consortium libraries, thereby saving approximately \$10,000 per annum;
- Networking among library professionals throughout the state, thereby increasing job efficiency and effectiveness;
- Increasing bargaining power for future integrated library system contracts for the Consortium, in order to maintain cost effectiveness;
- Allowing greater access to the library collection successfully developed at Kettleton Memorial/Sitka Public Library;
- Producing more streamlined and effective Collection Development policies, focused on new items and/or items specifically of interest to Sitkans, rather than replacement of older items now available through the JLC;

- Increasing the amount of materials available to Sitka's library users by a matter of hundreds, especially through the inclusion of libraries such as the University of Alaska-Anchorage, Anchorage Public Library, and Juneau Public Library, and
- Providing Sitka's library users with a more user-friendly and effective online catalog, along with increased access and control over their library accounts

At the July 29, 2015 meeting of the CBS Assembly, I gave a report and presentation on the JLC. At that time, I noted that our patrons had quickly and enthusiastically taken to the new system. However, circulation of materials among Sitka Public Libraries and other JLC members, both in filling holds to other libraries, and returning items borrowed from other libraries, had resulted in a rise in postage cost and staff time preparing mailing. Mr. Eisenbeisz asked that I return in early 2016 to report on how significant the postage increase turned out to be.

PRESENT FINDINGS

At my July 28, 2015 report, there were over 400 items per day in transit either to, or from our library for JLC holds. Usage for the JLC remains high, but after the initial wave, average daily usage has evened out at approximately 250 items per day. The system has assumed the lion's share in receiving and filling inter-library loans. However, ILLs are still placed, since not every item is available through the JLC. Staff time for mailing and other JLC processing duties has definitely increased. There are regularly large boxes of JLC mail both coming in, and going out. The library staff have developed procedures to make handling the volume more effective and efficient, but care must be taken to maintain the mail flow. Otherwise, there can be a build-up of items, especially those to be returned to the individual JLC libraries. Library staff have been up to this task, and we will continue to work to improve efficiency.

Postage costs have clearly increased from FY 2015 to FY 2016. For FY 2015, total postage was 4,160.35 of a budgeted \$15,000. I reduced the 2016 budget line for postage to \$11,000, and we are on target to come in under that. Total FY 2016 postage for the Library stands just under \$8125.00, 74% of the estimated budget. For FY 2017, now that we are in our new space, library traffic has increased significantly, and we anticipate greater JLC usage, the amount submitted for postage has been raised to \$15,000 once again.

While the cost for the postage line has increased, they are offset by both reductions in other budget lines, and by the increased services to library users. The anticipated financial benefits from joining the JLC are clear. Costs for our integrated library system has gone down from over \$17000 to less than \$7000, and that number can continue to decrease as other libraries join the Consortium. Three more libraries recently joined, with others anticipated over the next two years. We should find out in August what next year's JLC cost will be.

The additional items available in the JLC has also allowed us to decrease the new Books & Publications line, with the submitted FY 2017 line down to \$70,000 from \$88,500. Collection development has been more proactive, and replacement costs significantly reduced. Library users are clearly using the JLC on a regular, prolonged basis, and library staff have made a concerted effort to promote the service and teach our patrons how to use it.