

FACT SHEET ON THE PROPOSED CACHE COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

Written by Jay Monson, Chair, Cache County Council/Logan City Council Joint Countywide Library Study Committee, with input from other Committee Members: Craig Peterson, Brian Chambers, Kathy Robison and Dean Quayle

A library of wisdom, then, is more precious than all wealth, and all things that are desirable cannot be compared to it.

- Richard de Bury

In an attempt to be specific and to give full disclosure to citizens in Cache County about the countywide library proposal “Opinion poll” which will be on November’s ballot, below are some facts, which hopefully will address concerns and questions. Readers are welcome to contact the Utah State Library Board for verification of what follows:

- 1. “*We the People* of the United States,” begins our US Constitution which is the basic premise of all government in our nation.. All ‘public’ institutions, schools, universities, national, state, and city buildings and offices, etc., belong to the people. Us. This certainly includes all public libraries!**
- 2. Every citizen who lives within the confines of this valley is a citizen of Cache County. That includes all citizens of Logan, Smithfield, Providence, North Logan, Hyrum and all other towns and cities as well as the increasing number of residents in the unincorporated areas of the County.**
- 3. All citizens of this county currently pay a tax levy for public school support, either in the Cache County or Logan City school districts. They pay this tax, as do citizens all across this land, to support ‘public schools,’ even if they chose to send their children to private schools or have no children at home.**
- 4. Most citizens in the USA also pay a tax levy in support of a public library system. Throughout the land and for most Utahns, this is a countywide public library system. Cache County had such a system until 1976 when on a two to one vote the then County Commission abolished such. Since that time in our valley, some cities and towns have provided library service, plus in recent years a state and county supported Bookmobile.**
- 5. In all cases, a county library system is less expensive per population than individual city/town library operations. The principal of “economy of scale” applies to library acquisitions, processing, daily operation and services. A record of this fact is published annually by the state. Tax levies for County Libraries are all lower than tax rates for City/Town Libraries. The Utah state maximum allowed Tax Levy is 0.001% of assessed home value. Only city supported libraries come even close to that cap. Individual cities providing library services such as Mt. Pleasant (0.000883), Provo (0.000659), North Logan (0.000682) and Logan (0.000771) are examples. Countywide**

library systems are all at much lower tax levies, to include: Davis County (0.000348), Grand County (0.000344), Salt Lake County (0.000564) and Washington County (0.000239). Please note that Washington County's population is about the same as Cache County's. To illustrate this further, consider these facts:

- a. As stated on the ballot, the tax levy to support a Cache County Library System to begin with would be what Logan and North Logan pay currently in their tax levies (avg. 0.000726). On the average home in Cache Valley valued at \$192,661, taxable value \$105,936, that tax levy would be \$77.06 per year or \$6.42 per month.
 - b. If we compare the above with Washington County, which county's population is most similar to Cache County, but already has a countywide library system, their levy tax is only 0.000280, or \$29.66 on a home valued at \$192,661, just \$2.47 per month.
 - c. The rationale for having a hire tax levy in the beginning for Cache County is for start-up costs, such as having the same computer programs operational in all Branch Libraries, the mechanics of establishing a system wide sharing of all materials, etc. Washington County's tax levy was higher than at present as they completed new library buildings and extended service throughout the entire county. Now it is an excellent system, fully working and operational throughout the county and, they can now assess a lower level. And remember, the state tax levy limit is 0.001% of assessed home value, so a cap is in place which prohibits assessment of a higher levy even as a county begins to establish such.
6. Thus a countywide system for our county would assuredly be much less expensive than individual city/town libraries. The comparison is also true for those cities and towns in our valley who pay for their library out of city funds (rather than a dedicated tax levy) when comparing collection sizes and services available.
 7. No city/town library in the valley would be 'forced' to be part of a countywide library system if and when it is established. The County Council has stated that it will review voting totals for each city/town and the unincorporated areas of the county and then meet with and invite those elected officials where a majority of citizens supported the re-establishment of a countywide library system to become part of a countywide library, with eventual branch libraries in those parts of the valley.
 8. Cities/towns which now have library buildings could either 'transfer' ownership and full responsibilities for such to the county, or if they wish to retain ownership of said current buildings, they could enter into an inter-

local agreement between the city/town and the county and determine prorated expenses for library operations to be paid by the countywide library system to the city. By state law, such agreements cannot include debt payments on a building. In our valley, only Hyrum has an outstanding debt for their beautiful new library building. Should Hyrum determine to be part of the countywide system, the county would pay for all operational expenses for the library from the county tax levy and Hyrum could therefore utilize all of the money it now expends from the city general fund for the library towards paying off the debt. Thereafter, that city tax would no longer be needed nor collected and then Hyrum citizens would enjoy the same full benefits of a countywide system at the same lower county tax levy rate.

- 9. In those cities; towns which join the system, citizens in towns which now spend general fund monies for library services, could work with their elected officials to ask that formerly collected taxes are reduced and accounted for, since no town/city funds would now be necessary for libraries.**
- 10. No current library personnel would lose their jobs. This has been verified by State Library Board personnel who called that assertion, ‘foolhardy.’ Those who already know the operations of a local library will be essential in helping such become part of a countywide system. State “certification” for library staff only applies to large libraries or large Branch libraries in a countywide system. In our valley, that is only the Logan City Library staff which already meets that requirement. Current library personnel in libraries joining the county system would now become county employees.**
- 11. The Bookmobile would not cease operation until it’s services were no longer needed in the portions of the county it now serves when they received service from a nearby Branch Library. Under the new system, the collection from which the Bookmobile could draw would be many times greater than at present.**
- 12. Someday, not initially, Branch Libraries could exist in every part of the valley, as they do now in counties, which have used this system in Utah and across the entire country. Again, look at Washington County for an example of this reality. It has branches located throughout the county from St. George, to Enterprise, to New Harmony!**
- 13. The immediate and major benefit of moving to a countywide library system would be the greatly expanded number of books and other media materials now housed in separate collections. To illustrate, Logan City Library has 181,559 items in its collection. North Logan has 54,401 items. These two collections combined equal 235,960 items, more than half of the total collections of all libraries in the county combined which would be 436,435 items. (Other collection totals are: Hyrum 57,662; Lewiston, 31,911; Newton,**

32,979; Richmond, 23,279; Smithfield, 32,912; and the Bookmobile/Providence/River Heights Library, 21,732. Compare these figures with the immediate combined collection of 436,435 items.

14. Another great benefit would be that books and materials could be ordered and reserved from home computers and delivered to the nearest branch library for pick-up. They could then be returned to any branch in the system. That service now exists in every countywide library system in Utah and other states.
15. A Countywide Library Board composed of representatives of towns/cities and the unincorporated area, who opted to be part of the system, would govern a countywide library system. The County Library Board would advise and 'answer to' the Cache County Council and the County Executive. Each Branch Library would have a "Friends of the Library" board or committee to advise the County Board of local concerns and needs. Thus, "local control" would be part of the system. One only has to look at how smoothly these countywide systems operate elsewhere to dispel myths and concerns about the assertion of 'loss of local control.'
16. The proposal for a countywide library system existed long before a proposal was explored by Logan City administrators for the possible construction of a new Logan Library building. The Logan City Council never approved such a proposal, nor has it been mentioned in the past year and a half. Indeed, when city offices were moved to the renovated former Justice Building, considerable remodeling and expansion occurred as the Logan Library took over the entire vacated portions of former "City Hall. All residents of the county and visitors to Logan are welcome to visit the Logan Library. Stop in for a look and you will see a greatly expanded library facility with a very large area now for children and another for young adults and one for special collections, as well as numerous other changes in this very fine greatly enlarged library facility. In all likelihood, should the vote in November indicate a countywide system is desired, the newly remodeled and expanded Logan Library facility would be the main branch of the county library system and open for full usage to all residents of the valley whose towns/cities determined to join such.
17. Despite what some people may think in today's increasingly technological world, library usage is up all across the land. Percentages of citizens in Utah who use libraries, show Utah in the top five states in the nation, and Utah is number one in the nation for young mothers who regularly use library services and one of the top two for usage by Senior Citizens. Increasingly, libraries are viewed as cultural centers, as information centers, and as gathering places for citizens.

At a meeting of the Utah League of Cities and Towns, two years ago, pollster Dan Jones gave a report concerning what citizens inquiring about moving to Utah due to a job opportunity or for other reasons, want to know about our state. He said the number one question is not, “surprisingly, how much influence does the LDS Church have in Utah?” but rather, what kind of public education and public library service exists?”

At the same meeting, a presentation by then Providence Mayor Randy Simmons, extolled the ‘great advantages’ his city enjoys due to it’s close neighbor Logan. Fire Protection, Emergency Medical Services, Recycling, Garbage and Green Waste Collection, Sanitation, etc., were all identified as ‘excellent’ services for which Providence citizens benefited greatly and would have to pay much more if the city alone was to provide these services. There are many other fine examples of city/town/county cooperation, which save citizens of this valley millions of dollars annually.

A great Utah humanitarian, who devoted his life to serving others, Dr. Lowell L. Bennion, wrote: “A medical doctor once told me that the saddest patients he has, are not the physically disabled, but those who didn’t use their minds when they were young. He explained that the body breaks down, but the mind just gets richer as we go through life as we keep it alive, like a muscle. He encouraged people to get excited about some intellectual dimension of life. He then admonished for everyone to “Read, read, read, and think, think, think,” promising if they did so that life would still be good even when the body breaks down.”

Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) once said: “The man who can read and doesn’t, is no better off than the man who can’t read.”

RETURN ON INVESTMENT OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES TO UTAH’S ECONOMY*

The economic return to taxpayers’ investment in public libraries is \$7.35 per public tax dollar expended. The ROI was calculated by dividing the total economic value of public libraries minus the total direct benefit (\$706,854,261 - \$84,617,790 = \$622,236,471) by the public tax support (\$84,617,790) for all public libraries in Utah. This return per dollar of taxpayer funds comes back to taxpayers in the form of the value of public library services and the direct economic contribution of public libraries to the State economy. In addition to the direct benefits to the State economy, there are numerous other economic benefits that are valuable, but data was not available in this pilot study. A more thorough research project to collect that data is planned for. The contributions of public libraries to overall literacy, to helping people with special needs, to supporting the efforts of Pre & K-12 schools, to providing community gathering space, and to supplying information needs to individuals and businesses, are additional contributions to the State economy with

benefits difficult to measure, yet unquestionably irreplaceable. View the completed “pilot” study results at the USL website:

[*http://library.utah.gov/documents/library_value/economic_impact_utah_libraries.pdf](http://library.utah.gov/documents/library_value/economic_impact_utah_libraries.pdf)

Estimated Return on Investment of Utah Public Library Services Total Economic Value of Public Libraries†	\$ 706,854,261
Total Direct Benefit (Cost)	\$ 84,617,790
Utah Population Served by Public Libraries*	2,570,830
Dollar Return per Dollar of Public Tax Support	\$ 7.35

Calculation of Return on Investment for public libraries is a relatively new approach to determining the value of public library services to a state/region/community. A comparison of ROI data from other states that have conducted similar studies are listed below.

State Comparisons State	ROI
SW Ohio (2006)	\$ 3.81
Wisconsin (2007)	\$ 4.06
South Carolina (2005)	\$ 4.48
Denver Public Library (2006)	\$ 4.96
Pennsylvania (2006)	\$ 5.50
Florida (2005)	\$ 6.54
Vermont (2006)	\$ 7.26
Utah (2008)	\$ 7.35

(For more information, contact Dr. Steve Matthews, Utah State Library, at smatthews@utah.gov or 801-715-6722.)
