



CONTRA COSTA COUNTY LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

FROM RESILIENCE TO RESULTS

MARCH 2023

Introduction

Contra Costa County Library's 2021 progress report focused on Resilience: operating in a challenging environment which included a continued global pandemic, seasonal wildfires, ransomware attacks, and a contentious political landscape.

As we reflect on 2022, the Library is grateful for our collective resilience and encouraged that the landscape has shifted towards results.

This progress report will look at four areas:

- Current Landscape
- Key Milestones and Trends
- Strategic Goal Highlights
- Looking Ahead



Current Landscape

This section highlights our Library's current state, how our community has changed demographically, and what the national public library environment looks like.

Contra Costa County Library



2022 began with significant staffing shortages due to a large number of retirements and resignations; and like many industries around the country, we struggled to fill open positions due to worker shortages. We began the year with a 20 percent vacancy rate and reduced it to 12 percent by the end of the year. Despite staffing challenges, we had many bright spots.

In February, the Board of Supervisors voted to award Measure X funding for several new impactful Library projects, services, and initiatives:

- Four million dollars in one-time funds will address deferred maintenance in five county-owned library buildings -- Antioch, Kensington, Pinole, Rodeo, and the Ygnacio Valley branch in Walnut Creek.
- Measure X will also fund \$200,000 to staff our new early literacy outreach program. These funds, coupled with a \$150,000 grant, will pay for an outreach vehicle, to provide mobile early literacy services to underserved communities.
- The Library also received \$50,000 in one-time Measure X funding as seed money to help establish the countywide Library Foundation of Contra Costa. The Foundation's goal is to secure funding to address opportunity and equity gaps in services, programs, and facilities.



The Library applied for and received a total of \$2.5 million from the California State Library's Building Forward Library Infrastructure grant program for the Pinole and Antioch Libraries to address life-safety and critical maintenance needs of libraries throughout the state.



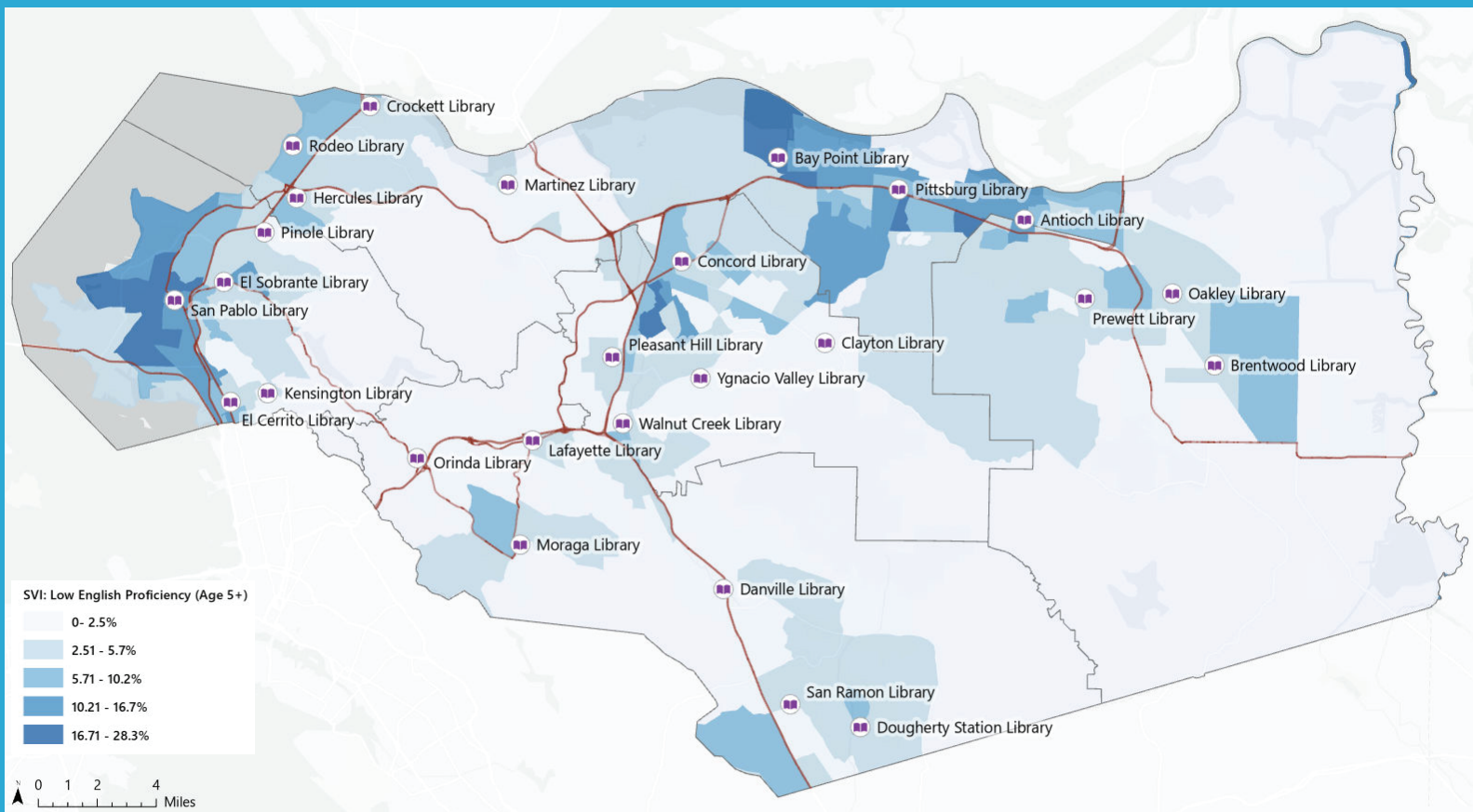
A \$657,000 grant from the State Library funded a project to migrate to CENIC, a cost-effective, high-speed broadband network provided through a partnership of education and governmental institutions throughout the state.

The Community

Our community is changing. Contra Costa County's population has increased by 10 percent since 2010, and 2022 population estimates for the county are at 1.16 million residents. The fastest growing communities in the county include Brentwood, Oakley, Pittsburg, San Ramon and Antioch.¹

The county is also becoming more diverse, with the immigrant population growing by 7.3 percent from 2014 to 2019, accounting for 47.4 percent of the county's total population growth. The top languages spoken at home other than English are Spanish (62.7 percent), Vietnamese (8 percent), Chinese (4.2 percent), and Philipino/ Tagalog (3.1 percent).²

The map below illustrates the library's service area, with the darker shaded areas showing where the highest percentage of people live who speak a language other than English at home.



¹ Demographics | Contra Costa County, CA Official Website

² New Americans in Contra Costa County.pdf, Gateways for Growth, New American Economy/State & Local, Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services, and Contra Costa Health Services.

Public Libraries

Public libraries across the country are slowly emerging from the pandemic, restoring open hours, expanding services, and re-engaging lapsed library users. At the same time, significant controversy has erupted across the country related to the content and programs libraries provide to the public. The following is an excerpt from the American Library Association summarizing the situation and how the library community is responding⁴.

In recent months, a few organizations have advanced the proposition that the voices of the marginalized have no place on library shelves. To this end they have launched campaigns demanding the censorship of books and resources that mirror the lives of those who are gay, queer, or transgender, or that tell the stories of persons who are Black, Indigenous or persons of color. Falsely claiming that these works are subversive, immoral, or worse, these groups induce elected and non-elected officials to abandon constitutional principles, ignore the rule of law, and disregard individual rights to promote government censorship of library collections. Some of these groups even resort to intimidation and threats to achieve their ends, targeting the safety and livelihoods of library workers, educators, and board members who have dedicated themselves to public service, to informing our communities, and educating our youth.

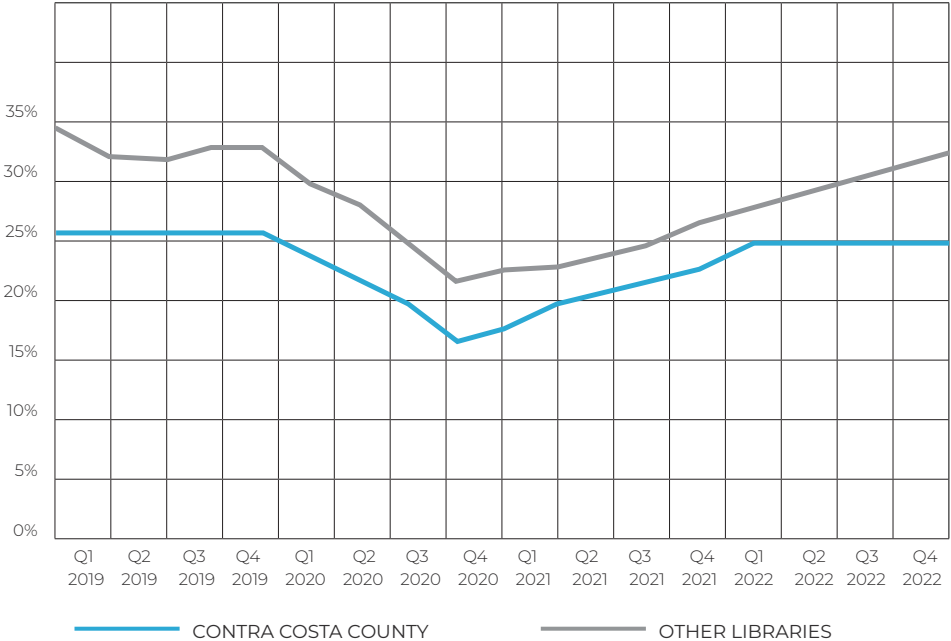
ALA strongly condemns these acts of censorship and intimidation. We are committed to defending the constitutional rights of all individuals, of all ages, to use the resources and services of libraries. We champion and defend the freedom to speak, the freedom to publish, and the freedom to read, as promised by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

Contra Costa County Library recently signed on to the Urban Libraries Council's Declaration of Democracy, committing to policies and actions that preserve and protect democracy in our communities. Public libraries are critical cornerstones of democracy, and democracy's future is diminished when people's access to power, information, a diversity of voices, and the ability to influence policy is restricted. The battle to protect democracy is a global struggle playing out at the local level and libraries have landed on the front lines. Democracy can only thrive with strong community-level support and engagement. We are committed to supporting legislation that affirms the freedom to access library materials with diverse points of view and to oppose legislation that seeks to restrict it.

Key Milestones and Trends

Several metrics highlight key milestones and trends for Contra Costa County Library over the past year. The first is market penetration, which reflects the number of households with at least one active library user compared to the total number of households in the service area.

Market Penetration Trends



As the graph illustrates, our library saw a decline in library activity in the first year of the pandemic. This mimics what was happening nationally with other libraries. Over the past several quarters, our market penetration is climbing back up to pre-pandemic levels. We are trending slightly lower than other libraries⁵, but the re-engagement of library users to our normal levels is further proof of the community’s resilience.

At the end of 2021, we surveyed our library users and received more than 14,000 responses. We were pleased to discover that our Net Promoter Score (NPS) improved significantly. This score measures customer loyalty by asking our cardholders the likelihood of recommending the library to others. Our NPS score increased from 53 to 65, increasing 12 points in three years⁶.

Our cardholders also reported that they believe the biggest challenge affecting our community is the cost of living. Other issues include safe communities, environment and sustainability, and community connections.

Cardholders consider the library's primary role to be a hub for education and information. Survey respondents ranked the following as their top choices for the library to engage in:

- Access to online resources and public computers
- Educational programs for youth
- Individual spaces to study and work

Customer satisfaction also ranked high on the patron survey. Our cardholders are most satisfied with customer service, the quality of the collection, and the availability of the collection.

We additionally surveyed library non-users in our community through an online e-mail panel survey. The top reasons for not using the library were issues related to COVID, busy schedules, and the preference to purchase rather than borrow books and other media.

Lack of awareness of what the library offers also seems to be a deterrent for non-users. For example, 50 percent of respondents who don't have a library card did not know the library offers eBooks, whereas cardholders' lack of awareness of digital resources was significantly lower at seven percent.

Compared with cardholders, non-users shared similar views about the role of the library, and also ranked cost of living as the biggest issue in the community.

“Excellent public resource, and I fully support libraries as critical to healthy educational and civic life at the community level.” (2021 Patron Survey)



Photo by Matthew Millman

Strategic Goal Highlights

Because the pandemic was so disruptive to our library, our community, and the world at large, we are sharing information on how well we are meeting our strategic goals in 2021-22 in comparison to the year prior to the pandemic.

Goal 1: The Library champions personal and community engagement in literacy and reading to enrich lives.

The size of the Library's collection has grown by more than 10 percent since 2018-19, adding over 150,000 new items.

The eBook collection grew by 115 percent, with the Library adding nearly 200,000 new eBooks within this three-year period.

In addition, the Library's database collection grew from 21 to 36 databases, adding tools that provide a rich variety of resources, from online tutoring to job search support to research information.

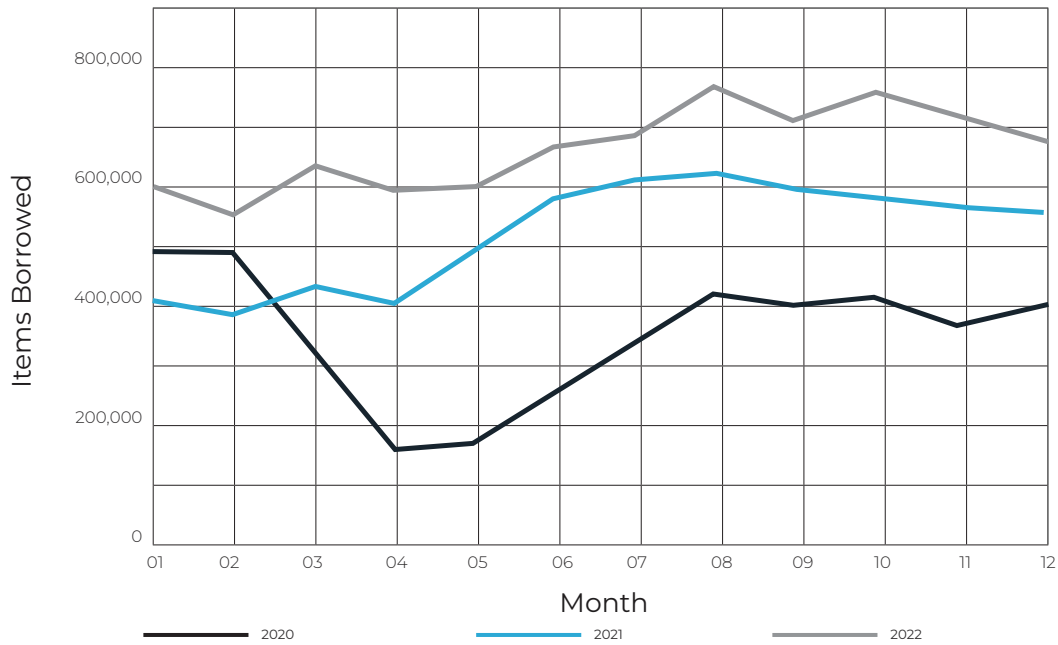
The physical collection has had a 6 percent decrease in size.

Overall, the number of items borrowed has increased by 13 percent since 2018-19.

The digital newspaper collection is of particular note, with borrowing rates increasing by a dramatic 1,000 percent during this three-year period.

Digital access to resources such as the *New York Times* has provided patrons with timely, reliable access to critical news information.

Total Items Borrowed Annually



(Graph: Annual Borrowing Stats)

On July 1, 2022, branches resumed in-person programming with renewed intention and purpose to develop programs that speak to individual communities and changing demographics. During the height of the pandemic, library staff adapted current programs and developed new ideas to engage learners with nearly 1,200 online and recorded programs in 2020-21.

Prior to the reintroduction of in-person programs, the Library provided over 700 unique self-directed activities that include interactive take-and-make crafts and activity bags. When in-person programming returned in 2022, the Library successfully began offering both virtual events, like the Master Gardener Series, and familiar in-person events, such as storytimes and book clubs. Overall, in 2022 the Library increased access to learning opportunities by offering 47 percent more in-person and online events than in the previous year.

The new Pleasant Hill Library opened on July 29, 2022, with 50,000 new books that provided an infusion of updated materials to circulate throughout the 26 library branches. The opening of the new state-of-the-art facility energized the Pleasant Hill community and increased opportunities for literacy and learning in Central County.



Goal 2: The Library ensures easy, equitable access to library services for all Contra Costa County residents.

In July of 2021, the Library increased the base level of weekly open hours provided at all full-service libraries from 35 to 40, resulting in a 14 percent increase of county-funded open hours across all branches.

In response to the nearly 400,000 (and growing) Contra Costa County residents who speak a language other than English at home, the Library increased materials available in over a dozen international languages, with more than 9,000 items added between 2020 and 2022. The Library offers robust International language collections in Russian, Farsi, Filipino, Chinese, and Spanish. The Library has also contracted with a Spanish language interpreter for programs to deliver regular inclusive programming for Spanish speakers.

Over 100,000 adults in the county lack basic literacy skills, and more than one in four new residents is an immigrant speaking another language at home. Project Second Chance (PSC) secured a five-year grant through the California State Library to expand their adult literacy work to include adults who are working on their English conversation skills. This is on top of the work PSC already does to provide free and confidential one-on-one tutoring for adults who read or write below a sixth-grade level in English. With over 47 percent of the County's population growth between 2014 and 2019 attributable to immigrants, these services respond to a growing need in Contra Costa County for English acquisition services.

The Library Accessibility Committee spearheaded a countywide Insiders Program for members of the community with cognitive disabilities. The program provides take-home craft project kits designed for teens and adults. More than 500 kits have been distributed at 11 branches since its inception in 2021.

“The Library is a civic institution that every community should have and support”

(2021 Patron Survey)



Goal 3: The Library delivers a consistent, high-quality, and inviting experience at all points of contact.

Since the murder of George Floyd in 2020, the Library significantly increased its efforts to work towards becoming an anti-racist organization. All staff are provided with racial equity training and the Library is systematically examining all policies, procedures and practices using a racial equity lens and updating them as needed.

The Library's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee also significantly increased its activities by initiating countywide events that celebrate Latinx Heritage Month, Anti-Hate Month, Black History Month, Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month, and Pride. A new webpage highlights diverse library resources and programs, and the Library can now offer Spanish language translations at events.

On March 1, 2022, the Board of Supervisors approved permanently waiving charges for the first 10 pages of black and white prints from public computers. This removed barriers for residents, especially for those in low-income areas who do not have access to reliable computers or printers.

Multiple locations underwent renovations between 2020 and 2022. The Concord Library and the Antioch Library both completed a vibrant refresh of their children's areas, creating more inviting spaces for visitors. The Ygnacio Valley Library repaved its parking lot for improved, ADA-compliant parking and building access.

The IT Department updated its assistive technology with new headphones and NVDA screen reading software at each branch to improve access for patrons with visual impairments.

“I feel very welcome anytime I visit the library. Every staff is eager to help me without delays.”

(2021 Patron Survey)

Goal 4: The Library successfully promotes its values, programs, and opportunities to the community.

Listen to the next chapter in your life.

Get access to thousands of eAudiobooks FREE with your Contra Costa County Library card.



The Library continues to work on strategies to increase awareness of library services. As noted with our market penetration increases, these efforts are working to attract new cardholders and keep the ones we have.

In 2022, we launched three new targeted email campaigns aimed at engaging new cardholders and reengaging existing cardholders.

We also introduced the Social Media Ambassadors program. This is an opportunity for members of the public to help promote their love for the library through their own social media channels. We are thrilled with the response, which already includes more than 100 volunteer members.

To supplement our communication with cardholders, the Library launched a three-month campaign with ads on bus tails in east, west and central county focused on eAudiobooks. Additionally, we launched a four-week campaign on the large digital billboard on Highway 4 east, also focused on eAudiobooks.

The Library finalized its contract for a four-month campaign with Effectv (formerly Comcast Spotlight) to create and air library commercials on cable and streaming services. The campaign will begin in late winter 2023.

In 2023, we will develop a new marketing plan with OrangeBoy, an outside consulting services firm, to focus our efforts on adding new cardholders.

“Many people do not know, in my experience, that libraries are for everyone and free! I love libraries and promote them wherever I live.”

2021 (Patron Survey)

Looking Ahead

The future looks bright for Contra Costa County Library as we continue to serve our communities with compassion, inclusiveness, and accessibility.

In 2023, we will embark on a refresh of our strategic plan. We will maintain the four main strategic goals but update our objectives and strategies. We will use our ongoing performance statistics, as well as results from a new patron and non-user survey, to inform these updates.

By the end of the year, we will develop and implement a more wide-reaching marketing plan that will ensure our efforts to promote library services and opportunities to our community.

As always, our overarching objective in 2023 is to make a positive impact on our community with a full array of services that meet people where they are. We will provide annual reports and continue to measure our effectiveness so we focus our resources where they are most needed and will make the greatest difference in the lives of our residents.



CONTRA COSTA COUNTY LIBRARY AT-A-GLANCE 2022



VOLUNTEERS
470



HOURS SERVED
14,342

LUNCH AT THE LIBRARY

9 Locations

5,640 Grab and Go Meals

2,851 Meal and Produce Boxes

MOST POPULAR BOOKS



EARLY READER

The Thank You Book
by Mo Willems



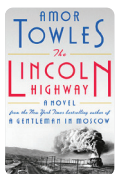
TEEN READER

Shadow & Bone
by Leigh Bardugo



MIDDLE READER

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Deep End
by Jeff Kinney



ADULT READER

The Lincoln Highway
by Amor Towles

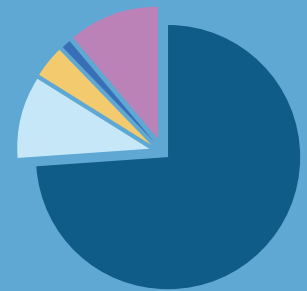
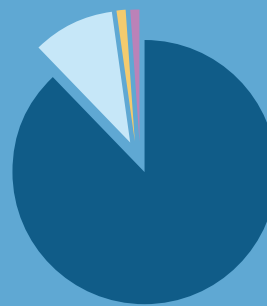
SUMMER READING



5,827

People Completed Reading Records

BUDGET

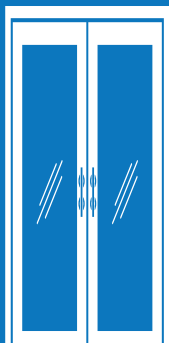


- PROPERTY TAX 89%
- TOWN / CITY 10%
- FINES / FEES 0%
- OTHER 1%

- STAFF 74%
- MATERIALS 10%
- FACILITIES 4%
- OFFICE EXPENSES 1%
- OTHER 11%

Revenue - \$36.3M

Expenditures - \$36.3M



OPEN HOURS
1138.5 per week
TOTAL
59,202