

## Case Study: Main Branch



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### **Mission Statement:**

The mission statement of the Santa Monica Public Library Main Branch is as follows:

To provide resources, services and a place to encourage the community to Read, Connect, Relax and Learn.

### **History:**

The history of the main branch is nearly as old as the city of Santa Monica itself.

According to the official website, the library humbly began as a reading room adjacent to Dr. Fred C. McKinnie's drug store in 1884, eight years after the first library association was established in the town. In 1888, the reading room was turned over to the newly formed Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) who, after struggling with the number of materials within the space, decided to turn over everything to the city in the 1890's. Two rooms in the Bank of Santa Monica building were set aside for the library and by 1893, the library was made open to the public of Santa Monica.

Over the next few decades the library would continue to grow from the Carnegie building on fifth street in 1904, to its expansion in 1926, to the move to sixth street in 1964, to its razing and reconstruction in 2003, and eventual re-opening in 2006. The library went from circulating 400 items to what it is now, a multi branch institution in which the

main branch has been visited over one million times by patrons both from and outside of the city. At its current state the library is located at 601 Santa Monica Boulevard where it operates every day between the hours of 10 am and 9 pm depending on the day. The main library closes only on holidays.



Santa Monica Public Library Image Archives

### **Governance:**

The library board at the SMPL consists of five members to be appointed by the City Council from the qualified electors of the City. The members each serve four year terms. At its current state these members are Arlene Hopkins, Kathleen Sheldon, Lucien (Lu) Plauzoles, and Naomi Seligman. The current chair is Marc Morgenstern. According to the mission statement of this group the library board "shall have charge of the administration of the Santa Monica Public Library." There are two major components to the responsibilities, jurisdictions, and authority of the board. The first is that the board is to "make and enforce such by-laws, rules and regulations as may be necessary for the administration, government and protection of the City Library." The second is that the library board is to "accept money, personal property or real estate donated to the Library Board of the Santa Monica Public Library or its predecessor." Meetings of the library board occur once a month to discuss the agenda of the library although there are sometimes special meetings that will occur to discuss things like budgeting and city-wide priorities. These meetings are generally around two hours in length.

### Budget:

According to the city of Santa Monica the overall adopted budget for the SMPL for 2018 - 2019 was \$13,414,418 for the division and \$ 13,376,418 under “major account groups by fund” the latter encapsulates the other funding sources that provide for the library.<sup>1</sup> In the first category the direct costs were split between four categories. Administration and facilities which gets \$3,363,719 of the budget plans and oversees the operation of the department, develops the budget, and supports the successful accomplishment of all the divisions goals and objectives within the library. Information management, getting \$2,875,465 of the budget is responsible for the strategic implementation of the library’s technology initiatives and the maintenance/support for the library’s collection. Public and branch services, receiving \$4,143,163 of the budget supports the wellbeing and lifelong learning of the community through innovative programs and activities. Lastly, reference services, receiving \$3,032,071 of the budget is focused on four areas: collection development and management, reference services, adult computer literacy skills, and circulation services. Within the major account groups by fund section the money is split between two categories: Salary and Wages totaling \$10,673,223 for 71.5 permanent positions and 41 temporary positions, and Supplies and Expenses totaling \$2,703,195. The major account groups funding comes from a variety of locations. The salary, wages, supplies, and expenses are supported by the general fund for a total of \$13,322,585. A special revenues and source fund provides a total of \$100,000 according to a revised budget form. Lastly, the category of miscellaneous grants funds provides \$38,000 to the library.

### Strategic Plan:

The strategic plan for the Santa Monica Public Library has four tenets as defined by their website, each of which have specific goals within them that allow for programming propositions of potential ideas for the next few years.<sup>2</sup> They are as follows:



<sup>1</sup> Cole, Rick, Katie Lichtig, Anuj Gupta, Gigi Decavalles-Hughes, Susan Lai, David Carr, Paul Chung, et al. 2017. “City of Santa Monica Budget Addendum FY 2017 - 2019 Adopted Biennial Budget: Creating a Sustainable City of Wellbeing,” 132.

<sup>2</sup> “Santa Monica Library Strategic Plan.” n.d. Santa Monica Public Library (blog). Accessed November 16, 2019. <https://smpl.org/StrategicPlan/>

### **Vibrant learning center:**

The idea of the Santa Monica Public Library as a vibrant learning center means that the library should provide a space for inspiring learning opportunities for the community, ones that are grounded in best practices and equipped with the latest tools and technology in order to help all those who enter into the library in the modern age. The Santa Monica Public Library thus offers technologies and tools to be utilized by the community for school and life successes. This tenet has three specifically defined goals: 1. focus on growing the number of adult learners and tutors in adult literacy programs by utilizing current community connections and developing new ones. 2. Pilot and develop digital literacy programs for all ages. And 3. Co-sponsor programs and displays with agencies in the community that share the mission of the library in the preservation and exhibition of Santa Monica History.

### **Wellbeing cultivator:**

The SMPL as a wellbeing cultivator places value on how the library enhances the overall welfare of the community that surrounds the building. Through this, the library is a place of support for all ages and all backgrounds for those living within the city of Santa Monica. This tenet has four defined launch goals: 1. Deliver focused research and reference support to the community through the use of the Library's varied collection and the Book a Librarian Program. 2. Promote electronic resources, online training, and instruction. 3. Collaborate with Wise & Healthy Aging to develop and pilot additional programs and services for seniors. And 4. Instituting the removal of fines for those under the age of 18. All four of these goals are supplemented with programs proposals and ideas according to the website.

### **Dynamic third place:**

A third place is defined as a space where people spend their own time that is not their home nor their place of work/schooling. Third places are locations known for recreation of social activity and the SMPL desires to provide comfortable, engaging, and beautiful spaces for people to read, relax, discover, learn, and participate in social and civic discourse. The goals of this particular tenet are, 1: The Facilities Master Plan, a twenty-year outlook on the maintenance of the building as well as the branches with possible future improvements. 2: The creation of a 3 – 5 year technology plan for the library ensuring that the main branch (and other branches) have the most up to date technologies within their space. And 3: The implementation of self check out stations for books to improve access and usability.

### **Community and Cultural Connector:**

The last portion of the strategic plan focuses on how the SMPL forms community and social partnerships to bolster collective impact for the sake of helping condition social change within the community and beyond. The launch goals for this include 1. Continuing the Santa Monica Reads program. 2. Providing volunteer opportunities for all ages to help connect members of the community together. And 3. Hosting the Arts + Literacy Festival to promote the Cradle to Career's Kindergarten Readiness Campaign, which allows exploration for children to help learn about life paths.

### Basic outputs:

The basic outputs of the main library were gathered through statistical analysis of both surveys taken as well as information collected throughout the years. According to the survey taken at the end of the 2017 – 2018 year 71% of responders went specifically to the main branch library compared to the other branches of the SMPL. 49% visited weekly, while 26% visited monthly, and 16% daily.<sup>3</sup> With regards to the statistical analysis taken by the library itself from the 2015 - 2016 period a total of 772,852 visited the library in comparison to the spread of 1,184,130 that visited all of the SMPL branches combined. During that year there were also 6430 new registrations, 851,165 total checkouts, 134,998 filled hold requests, and 193,956 questions answered by the staff. The statistics of programming led to a total of 237 adult programs being held with an attendance of 8,814, and 462 youth programs offered with an attendance of 16,337.

### Branding and Marketing:

The SMPL's branding and marketing style via social media presence is homogenous in design. They use a blueish green coloring on both their own website as well as on social media. Their outreach through social media presents what is occurring within the library to the public such as programming, but they also participate in other outreach methods like engaging with members of the community online.



### Programing:

Because this branch of the library is particularly popular within the city of Santa Monica, the programming reflects the demographics both through the variety of what is offered, but also the amount of programs offered within this branch of the SMPL. The main branch at SMPL has events that occur every week, many of which are delegated to certain demographics such as age or primary language. As displayed on the website, the main branch offers movie screenings, author talks, music & concerts, book discussions, tours, instruction and classes about various topics, storytime for a variety of ages, and talks amongst other programming basics that are standard at public libraries.<sup>4</sup> The website also allows for the opportunity to submit program proposals to the library. Furthermore, they distinguish programming for adults, teenagers, and children on the website.

For children the types of programs that they offer are a variety of storytime sessions for babies, toddlers, and youths. There are “Read and Play” sessions which combine skill development and socialization for ages 0 to 5. They also offer a program called L.E.A.R.N which stands for Learn, Excel, Achieve and Read Now, a one on one program for children to have access to volunteers that are able to help them with schoolwork, reading comprehension, and

<sup>3</sup> “Santa Monica Public Library - 2017-18 Customer Survey Results.” n.d. Santa Monica Public Library. Accessed November 16, 2019. <https://smpl.org/2017-18CustomerSurvey/>.

<sup>4</sup> “Santa Monica Public Library - Programs.” n.d. Santa Monica Public Library. Accessed November 16, 2019. [https://smpl.org/Programs\\_and\\_Events.aspx](https://smpl.org/Programs_and_Events.aspx).



other assignments. Lastly, they offer explore sessions which are curated events for ages 3 to 6 that allow intellectual exploration into specific topics such as dinosaurs and space.

For teenagers the programs are just as varied, as the library offers up school tutoring, college application workshops, programming workshops, and other such educational events. Beyond education the main branch offers teen advisory council meetings, which meet twice monthly and advocate for the library as well as work on special projects in exchange for community service hours.

### **Special programming:**

Two unique programs offered by this library are Santa Monica Reads and The Living Room. The former, which was started in 2003, is described as a community reading initiative that invites Santa Monica residents and visitors to read the same book and come together for the sake of discussion. This occurs in the late winter/early spring season and often includes additional programming events such as “author talks with that year's author, special events related to the subject matter of the book, lectures by scholars on topics related to the book, as well concerts, readings, and movie screenings.” This occurs at the main branch but is also extended to the other branches as there is more than one meeting that occurs. The latter program, named the Living Room was a program instituted in 2008 which aims to “help all adults under, around and over 50 years of age rediscover the library as their community living room, a place to connect, get active and learn.”



### **Partnerships:**

As a large library within the city of Santa Monica, the SMPL has a variety of partnerships with various services/groups that help to create collaborative programs to benefit the community. According to the SMPL website the library has ten partnerships (the full number is eleven, but the Virginia Avenue Park partnership is exclusively with the Pico branch), each of which have distinct programs that relate to the main branch and often extend to the other branches as well. Most recently they have announced (in June of 2019) a partnership with the LA Law library to teach monthly QuickLook classes, which according to the news bulletin are “a shortened version of many of the most popular legal education classes taught at LA Law Library Main Branch in downtown Los Angeles.”

The partners of the Santa Monica Public Library are as follows:<sup>5</sup>

- Community & Cultural Services: Sea-side pop up libraries at the Annenberg Community Beach House and Dorothy Green Park.
- Friends of the Santa Monica Public Library: Supporting an array of ongoing programming at each branch including Santa Monica Reads, Summer Reading for Adults, Kids and Teens, SMPL at the Beach, Soundwaves New Music Series Concerts and El Día de Los Niños/El Día de Los Libros (Children's Day/Book Day).
- Heal the Bay/Santa Monica Pier Aquarium: The Heal the Bay works with the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium to ensure the protection of animals that live in the Bay. Contributes to the Library's annual SMPL at the Beach.
- The Library Foundation of Santa Monica: Promotes strong and optimal community wellbeing through lifelong learning and intellectual curiosity through the library.
- The People Concern: Implements pop-up and drop-in services conducted by a Community Outreach Specialist for homeless individuals at all library locations, though the most recent ones have been held at the main branch.
- Santa Monica Farmers Market: Programming with authors and celebrity chefs, Library pop ups at Farmers Market, and market engagement.
  - Santa Monica Malibu Unified School District (SMMUSD): Yearly promotion of the Summer Reading Program.
  - UCLA Health 50 Plus Program: Collaborated on the Rediscovering U program, an afternoon of exploration and fun for older adults. The keynote speaker was Sandra Tsing Loh and workshops were offered on finding purpose, aging with a positive outlook, boosting brain health, leveraging YouTube, and optimizing vitality.
- WISE & Healthy Aging: This partnership offers programs that advance the dignity and quality of life of older adults through leadership, advocate and high-quality, innovative services. One such program is the drop in Appy Hour, where older adults can obtain one-on-one assistance related to technology.
- YALLWEST Young Adult Book Festival: Before the festival the main library hosts Fierce Friday, an exclusive after-hours preview event featuring the biggest young adult literature authors, who greet and mingle with fans, and sign their books. In addition to this, fans can participate in fun activities, such as in previous years, VR experience.



<sup>5</sup> "Partnerships." n.d. Santa Monica Public Library. Accessed November 16, 2019. <http://www.santamonicapubliclibrary.org/partnerships/>.

### **Sustainability:**

The city of Santa Monica has received a Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Gold Rating for the main library and it is the City's second major facility after the Public Safety Facility designed and built with the intent of significantly reducing the building's negative impact on the environment. Because of this push for sustainability, the main branch offers a variety of benefits including environmental protection, economic advantages, and health and safety benefits which help the building as well as those who use it. The key features of this sustainability initiative are Sustainable Site Planning, Conservation of Materials and Resources, Enhanced Indoor Environmental Quality, Water Management and Conservation, Energy Efficiency and Building Atmosphere, and Public Education and Information.<sup>6</sup> In addition, there are planned events related to sustainability every week at the library.

### **Foundation and Friends Group:**

According to the foundation's website "the library foundation of Santa Monica is comprised of community leaders in the fields of technology, science, entertainment, business and the arts as well as civic leaders."<sup>7</sup> They strategically focus on three areas. The first is cultural programming, focusing on events such as lecture series and reading programs. The second is opportunity and innovation, which focuses on providing tools to help the community. The third is community engagement, which focuses on community building and social influence. Beyond this they help to fund the Santa Monica Public Library's own series of programs that correspond with their strategic focus. As per the IRS form, this group is classified as a public charity. Currently the foundation is in hiatus and needs to be rebuilt before any more work is done.

The friends group on the other hand according to Patty Wong, director of library services for the City of Santa Monica, is currently active providing one third of the programming budget for the Santa Monica library or around \$100,000 a year on average with the total for 2018 being \$118,217. The relationship between the library and its friends group is currently in good standing.



### **Challenges:**

The challenges of the SMPL main branch are numerous as not only do they effect the relationships between the library and its patrons but they they often extend into challenges that effect the entire community. During a conversation with Patty Wong and Erica Cuyugan (assistant city librarian at Santa Monica) one of the big problems that they mentioned was addressing the community's desires in relation to the library's desires. Often times people within the community want the library to be the same as they had previously encountered it when they

<sup>6</sup> "Santa Monica Public Library: Sustainable Library." n.d. Santa Monica Public Library. Accessed November 16, 2019. [https://smpl.org/sustainable\\_library.aspx](https://smpl.org/sustainable_library.aspx).

<sup>7</sup> "Library Foundation of Santa Monica: About." n.d. Library Foundation of Santa Monica. Accessed November 16, 2019. <http://www.libraryfoundsm.org/about>.



were younger but the library as a dynamic place cannot function in that manner, it has to shift with the culture of the city and the library cannot exist as the same institution it was ten or fifteen years ago because a city or a community does not stay static over a period of time. Because of this mentality the library needs to adapt itself in a way that fits within the plan of the community, but also pushes itself forward so that it doesn't compromise on its own goals. Patty Wong states with regards to this dynamic that as a library "you might not be able to change someone's mind (on a project or a program) but you don't want people to oppose your ideas." This requires representing what the library is doing as a future good or even as a necessity to the community, as something that can benefit those beyond the space of the library. A good example of this type of programming would be the SMPL's work with the homeless population which includes specific events catered to this population but also part time social workers who aren't funded through the library. This particular example extends further dealing with issues such as making sure that other government institutions working with homeless populations have similar standards or are on the same page when dealing with these populations. For instance, the parks and recreation department or the police should communicate with the library and vice versa to make sure that they are abiding by the same or similar standards when working with the homeless. What this challenge determines is that the library does not exist within a vacuum, but rather it is a dynamic place that has many connections to both the community and to other institutions that also work within the city. The requirement of communication between all groups is where many challenges come from and the library is consistently working to get things accomplished for themselves and for the city.