

FINAL REPORT

Consultation on

Materials Handling

FOR HUNTINGTON BEACH PUBLIC LIBRARY

November 18, 2014

PREPARED BY THE GALECIA GROUP

About The Galecia Group

The Galecia Group provides technology consulting to libraries. We specialize in library software, automated materials handling, RFID, and self-service technologies.

Lori Bowen Ayre
The Galecia Group
15 Old Creek Road
Petaluma, CA 94952

Ph. 707.763.6869
info@galecia.com

www.galecia.com

BACKGROUND	3
WORKING TOWARD THE “IDEAL” LIBRARY ENVIRONMENT	4
COMPONENTS OF THE IDEAL ENVIRONMENT	8
Policy Changes	8
Eliminate Media “Rentals”	8
Eliminate Fees for Placing Holds and Allow Patron to Specify Pick-up Location	10
Implement Robust Self-Service Check-in and Check-out	12
Automated Materials Handling (AMH)	12
Numbers and Placement of Self-Check-in/out Machines	14
Optimize Library Spaces for Library Patrons	16
Move Friends Gift Shop to Media Center Space	16
Eliminate Pre-shelving Staff Area and Convert to Improved Teen Space	17
Reduce and Relocate Reference Materials and Put Media There	17
Organize Public PC Services	17
Bring New Books Collection Closer to Front of Library	18
Implement New Staffing Model	19
Other Recommendations	21
Commit to Systemwide Signage and Wayfinding Initiative	21
Conduct Deomgraphics Reseach to Identify Library Service Priorities at Branches	21

Huntington Beach Public Library (HBPL) has had an automated handling system since the mid-1990's. Over the past few years, the functionality of this old system has steadily declined to the point where it is no longer functioning without damaging items.

HBPL is in the process of tagging their collection with RFID tags. They have contracted with Bibliotheca for their RFID system (staff workstations and security gates) and two self-check-out kiosks. In addition, the plan is to install a new materials handling system (self-service return with sorter from Bibliotheca), which will streamline and simplify the check in process for library materials returned to Central.

The Library contracted with Lori Bowen Ayre, Principal Consultant at The Galecia Group, to provide assistance with providing a big picture view of the materials handling workflows and to assist with their RFID and automated materials handling implementation planning. In July, 2014, Ayre spent three days on-site visiting all the library locations, observing operations, interviewing staff, and meeting with Dave Noll of Bibliotheca.

This report provides recommendations for effectively implementing automated materials handling at Central. The recommendations are based on library-industry Best Practices and are designed to both streamline operations wherever possible and improve services for patrons.



The patron's experience of the Library is first visual and then physical. What they see as they approach the building, how they enter, and what they first see and encounter inside, their progression from one space and its designated activity to another.

How do they discover what they want to do and also find other surprises along the way?

We have the opportunity to optimize the experience for your patrons as well as provide the physical pathways for the most efficient materials and staff work flows, allowing staff to focus more time on providing high value services.

In an ideal library environment, your library will look more like this...

After quickly and easily finding a parking space, your patron approaches the main entrance. Prominently displayed on the building is:

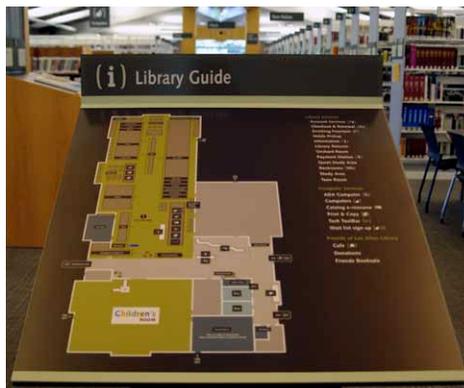
HUNTINGTON BEACH PUBLIC LIBRARY CENTRAL LIBRARY and CULTURAL CENTER

Above the main entrance is attractive and helpful signage indicating the door to the Central Library (as opposed to the Cultural Center/Theater). There is also helpful signage directing people to the Theater, in case that is their desired destination. To the right of the main entrance is a "Return Materials Here" sign. Below the sign is a self-check-in machine where patrons can return material without having to go inside the building.

Convenient Material Check-In

The exterior self-check-in unit has an awning to protect patrons from rain and the screen from glare. The screen is easy to read at any time of day and is lighted at night because returns are accepted 24 hours a day. The user interface displays simple, clear instructions for how to place items on the belt to return them. There is a shelf large enough for backpacks and purses and for organizing the material for return. The whole return process takes just a couple minutes even when returning 10-20 picturebooks.

After returning their material, many patrons will choose to go inside the Library. Their hands are now free of items, and they have had a receipt printed or emailed to themselves so they are confident their account is current. They enter the Library on the right side of the entrance as departing patrons exit on the left side. The flow of people in and out is continuous but not chaotic.



Inside the Library

Inside the Library, the foyer is brightly lit to accommodate people who have just stepped in from the sunlight. As patrons enter, they walk through the security gates which match the Library décor. Once through the gates, there is a large electronic display where Library events are promoted.

There are themed, permanent, directional signs clearly designating which way to go for the Children’s Library, New Books, Accounts, Media, and Public Computers – the most popular areas of the Library.

For patrons that didn’t return their material outside, there is another clearly marked patron return area inside the Library, to the right, just past the security gates. Both the external and the internal returns feed directly into the circulation workroom (formerly the Friends Gift Shop). Both returns are connected to a sorter that sorts the items to one of nine bins. Inside the circulation room, library staff are unloading the bins to bookcarts which are then taken directly out to the shelves. Returned items are shelved and ready for the next patron in the same day. For media and New Books, the staff make sure to get them back on the shelf within the hour so patrons have immediate access to these especially popular items.

Service Points

Outside of the circulation area is a staffed desk. Above the desk is a big “Information” or “Ask Us” sign (where the “Checkout” sign used to be). At the desk, people can get new library cards, renew their cards, pay fines and fees or just ask a question. The people staffing the Ask Us Desk are trained to answer ready reference questions as well as handle all issues related to patron accounts. They can also direct people to the best places for quiet study, help them find the Self Service Holds Pick-up Area, New Books, anything in the stacks, and also where to get access to the public computers.

Wayfinding Orientation Guides

There are library maps available for all the places a public computer is available (with instructions for using the reservation and printing system). There is also a map clearly representing all the level changes in the Library and a guide to items in the stacks area so people know how to find the material they need and when to use the stairs versus one elevator or another.

From the Ask Us desk, signs hanging from the ceiling (or mounted above shelves) can be seen which designate the Children’s Area and Friends Gift Shop (relocated to what is now the Media Center), as well as New Books, Media, Study Areas, Stacks, and Public PCs.

In front of the Ask Us desk is a bank of brightly-colored check-out kiosks. The kiosks are arrayed along the railing so that patrons encounter them on their right as they leave the Library (unless they were in the Children's area which has its own two self-checks). There are no lines at the self-check machines because there are enough of them (four) and they are easy to use so check-outs are fast, even for patrons paying fines and fees with credit cards.

The New Books display (occupying the area where the Circulation Desk used to be) is the first library collection patrons encounter because this is where most people prefer to browse. This is an open area with plenty of exciting books to choose from and chairs to sit in while looking over the options.

Design for Patron Convenience

Just past the New Books is the Self-Service Holds pickup area (where New Books used to be). This is a well-trafficked area now that patrons are able to place requests for items online and staff will pull them from the shelf for them. The fact that patrons can designate any library as a pick-up location has been an extremely new service and circulation has increased as a result. Each item on the Holds shelf has a slip inside the top cover of the book or media case. All the Hold items are arranged alphabetically by patron last name (only the first four letters of the patrons last name are used, plus the last four characters from their library card). Items are shelved with the spine down and the slip sticking out so the patrons can easily find their items and the titles of the material cannot be seen (just for that extra little bit of privacy).

It's quick and easy for patrons to pop in to pick up their Holds (requested items) and they often end up finding an exciting New Book as they pass through the New Book area on their way out, just before checking out their material at the conveniently located self-check-out machines.

Because Media is the other extremely popular section, this collection is also easy to get to (it's just beyond the Holds shelf). Much of the Reference collection has been downsized (in favor of electronic reference material) and the important physical Reference material (e.g. phone books and Chilton's) are now upstairs in the stacks. Moving the Reference material out has created space for the media collection. Now patrons have access to media all the hours the Library is open (not just Media Center hours). Like other library material, the holds can be checked out at the self-check machines. There is no longer a charge for these items.

The current reference desk has been reduced in size but reference, research and computer support services are available there. Patrons can make appointments with a Librarian and enjoy one-on-one attention in a comfortable and safe environment, or get assistance from a Library Specialist trained to support people using computers. The sign above the desk simply says "Service Desk."

Public Computers

For patrons coming to the Library to use public computers, there are several areas to choose from. There are 3-4 15-minute computers in the space made available by reducing the size of the old Reference desk. This stand of computers is clearly indicated so people know where to go to quickly pop in and check their mail without needing a reservation. The 15-minute computers are on high tables so patrons have to stand to use them (and this discourages people from staying beyond the allotted time).

There's also a group of public computers on the main floor (in the same designated area they are now) and the printers are located just outside of the computer area. Staff at the nearby Service Desk can monitor this area and assist patrons having computer or printing problems as needed.

There is another bank of public computers available in the Teen Area (which is now located where the 'pre-shelving used to be.) By removing the old conveyor system and many of the (now unnecessary) shelves, the Teen Area is much more popular and well-used. The Teen Area has group-work tables with computers and some without, study carrels, and places for lounging around on the floor as well as on couches or cushions.

Another bank of public computers is available on the top floor in the periodicals area. Part of this floor has been designated a quiet zone so many patrons go here to do their homework or do research. Staff rovers regularly pass through this area to see if people need assistance and to monitor the activities there.

The numerous chairs and tables available throughout the Library are filled with patrons happy to be reading or working or playing in a nice, tranquil environment. Most of the hub-bub of activity is in the front of the library (including the Friends Book Sale which is in the same place) so the much of the rest of the Library is perfectly designed for people who want to come in and stay awhile, and convenient for people who desire a shorter visit.



Creating the Ideal Environment described above requires several changes to how people, spaces, and technology are used as well as a couple policy changes. It is not something that can be accomplished in one fell swoop, but it is a goal to which the Library can aspire. And with the implementation of a new materials handling system, there is an opportunity to take several steps toward this goal including making policy changes that support the new environment.

Moving toward this goal requires the Library to change policies related to how media and requested items are handled. It requires the Library to commit fully to a self-service approach for check-in and check-out and to expand the number of self-check-out machines and to implement automated materials handling with self-service check-in at Central. In order to maximize the investment in self-service technologies, it will require the Library to rethink how Library spaces are currently used. And finally, the move to higher rates of self-service provides an opportunity to change to a new staffing model that allows staff to provide higher-value services to patrons.

Eliminate Media “Rentals”

The primary policy change required at the Library is the elimination of the media rentals policy. This policy creates several impediments to the Library’s ability to provide excellent customer service at a reasonable cost and is contrary to the principle of equitably serving a library’s service population.

Media items are located in a secured area in the library, protected by an additional set of security gates and staffed each open hour with a clerk and another staff person (Library Specialist, Librarian and sometimes Senior Librarian). The clerk position is staffed 15 hours per week at a cost of approximately \$270/week (at average clerk pay of \$18/hour). The other position is staffed 40 hours per week and rates of pay vary but a reasonable estimate would be \$30/hour for this position, or \$1,200 per week. At \$1,470 per week, the cost of staffing the Media Center is approximately \$73,500 (assuming 50 weeks). The Library charges a one dollar rental fee for media. In 2013, the Library circulated 77,735 media items resulting in a gross income of \$77,735.

In other words, 95% of the media rental income is spent staffing the Media Center.

In addition, because it is so unusual for libraries to charge rental fees (only a handful of libraries in the United States do so), most state-of-the-art self-check machines are not designed to support upfront payments. This kind of charge would be considered

a “point-of-sale” transaction and this feature is usually offered at staffed workstations. Self-checks are designed around a circulation and a fines/fees payment paradigm so there is a complicated work-around required to charge a rental fee before the circulation transaction has been concluded. For example, the patron may be charged for the rental but the self-check machine cannot enforce payment. As a result the messages and patron account information is confusing to the borrower and it becomes nearly impossible for the Library to achieve a high rate of self-check use because so many patrons end up at the staff service desk so as to ensure they are doing it right.

Even more importantly, from a customer service point of view, the \$1 fee effectively segregates the Library’s media collection from low income patrons who would benefit most from the availability of these community resources. Like everyone else, these patrons have paid for the Library collection with their tax dollars, but this policy puts it out of reach.

Another result of this policy is that the Library provides very limited (if any) media items in the branch collections. This is partly due to the high staff impact of handling the point-of-sale transactions.

This means that only higher income patrons near the Central Library enjoy the benefits of the Library’s media collection.

Only 9% of the Library’s circulation is represented by CD/DVD circulations. In comparable library systems, the ratio ranges from 15% to as high as 50% of circulation and most fall in the 27%-47% range. It is possible that reducing the fee to fifty cents would increase circulation and help make the collection more affordable to low income patrons. This would represent an important customer service improvement. But whether one dollar or one cent, the “point-of-sale” approach will defeat the Library’s attempt to increase the number of self-service check-outs which, in turn, prevents the Library from using staff differently, and keeps an important component of the collection out of bounds for patrons who’s home library is Banning, Main Street, Helen Murphy or Oak View.

In summary, the “media rental policy” costs almost as much as it brings in, and creates numerous barriers to sharing the Library’s media collection equitably throughout the service area, and makes it impossible to achieve high self-check-out rates.

Eliminate Fees for Placing Holds and Allow Patrons to Specify Pick-up Location

Another policy change that would improve the customer experience is to allow patrons to place holds for material, without charging a fine, and to allow patrons to specify their own pick-up location. This practice has become quite standard around the country, in libraries large and small. While some libraries charge patrons for failing to pick-up their requested items, I know of no other libraries that charge patrons for the privilege of putting items on hold. It is perceived by patrons as an extremely valuable and much beloved service of their library.

Library patrons want it – they show in their returns patterns that they would use some of the branches for check-out if they could because they are using them already for returning material. For example, using data collected from January-August 2014, Central checked out 10,042 items that were returned to other branches. Banning received the most of these items at 3,524. Also, many were returned to Murphy (2,627). Main Street received 1,124 and Oak View 49.

In terms of staff impact, it is true that allowing patrons to specify their holds pick-up location creates a significant workload increase for circulation and delivery staff. Based on the experience at other libraries, I would expect the number of holds placed by patrons to double or even triple. Many of these requests will be filled by items at Central for pick-up at Central. This means they would need to be pulled from the shelves by staff, scanned and placed on the self-service holds shelves each day. Patrons specifying a location other than Central would need their items transported, by the Library's courier, and made available on new self-service holds shelves at each branch.

Patrons do request items today, and the workload is labor intensive in a different way. Patrons talk to library staff about an item they want and library staff look in the catalog to see if the item is available, and if so, where it is located. When items are available on another branch's shelves, the staff person often logs into that other branch and places the hold on the item and puts a note on the request to transfer it to their branch. In this way, some patrons are able to get the item they want delivered to where they want it. However, in the meantime, the staff person has just spent five minutes or more making this service available. And, ironically, this staff-intensive workaround is free. Patrons are only charged the \$1 request fee when they place their own holds. It appears that the objective of this policy might not be working.

A more customer-friendly approach is to simply allow patrons to place their own requests and to specify a pick-up location. The goodwill generated by this policy is well worth the effort. However, the Library will need to prepare for the cutover. For example, the delivery schedule will likely need to be increased to daily service to every location (and eventually require a larger vehicle), and systems staff will need to work with the ILS vendor to design a single transit/holds slip that can be used for requested items. The combination transit/holds slip could then be used by delivery staff to identify the destination library. The pick-up library will use them as labels on their self-service holds pick-up shelves (where they are arranged in alphabetical order by last name (or for more privacy, the first three letters of their last name and the last three digits of their library card number)).

Library staff will also need to be allocated to the pulling of requested items. However, this is an example of the valuable work that could be performed if more staff time was freed up from basic circulation transactions in favor of more self-service transactions.

Self-check-in and self-check-out can eliminate as much as 90% of the circulation work done by staff if implemented correctly. An effective implementation of self-service includes the following components:

- Correct placement of self-check-in and self-check-out machines
- Intuitive interfaces
- Properly tagged items so everything is read accurately and nothing that circulates requires staff intervention to check-in or check-out
- As few blocks as possible on accounts
- Eliminating “rentals” from the workflow because self-service kiosks support circulation but not Point of Sale transactions
- Adequate number of units to eliminate lines from forming
- Helpful and enticing/fun signage
- Supportive staff

Automated Materials Handling

Automated materials handling (AMH) systems, composed of self check-ins and sorters, are a high-impact technology because several steps in the staffed “check-in” process are completely eliminated by a combination of self-service and automation. They allow for material to be returned by patrons and then immediately sorted to a bin so staff can re-shelve them quickly. The self-check-in machine immediately checks in each item that the patrons induct. The systems can be configured to generate a paper receipt or to email a receipt to patrons. The machine detects items that have triggered a hold upon their return (just as happens in a staff-mediated return) and can be configured to generate the “transit/holds slip” automatically. Plus the returned items are sorted appropriately.

A common workflow for items that trigger a hold is to have the returned items sorted to a designated Holds bin (right near the printer that generates the transit/holds slip) so staff can match the slip to the item and put it immediately into a delivery bin for transport. Very little staff handling is required.

For media items, the staff handling is even more significantly reduced. With the combination of RFID and AMH single disc media sets no longer need to be inspected. The system is able to detect when the right disc is inside the case. These items then get sorted to a “ready-

to-shelve” bin. Multi-disc sets will still need to be opened to verify that all discs are intact, but since 63,118 of the 77,735 media circulations last year were single disc media, eliminating the need to open single disc media represents a huge reduction in handling.

It will not only save time but will also reduce ergonomic injuries associated with this step.

Items that are returned and need to be reshelved are sorted to separate bins in a manner that facilitates reshelving workflows. With a nine-bin sorter, the Library will have a lot of flexibility in how they configure the sorter. For example, I would suggest the following:

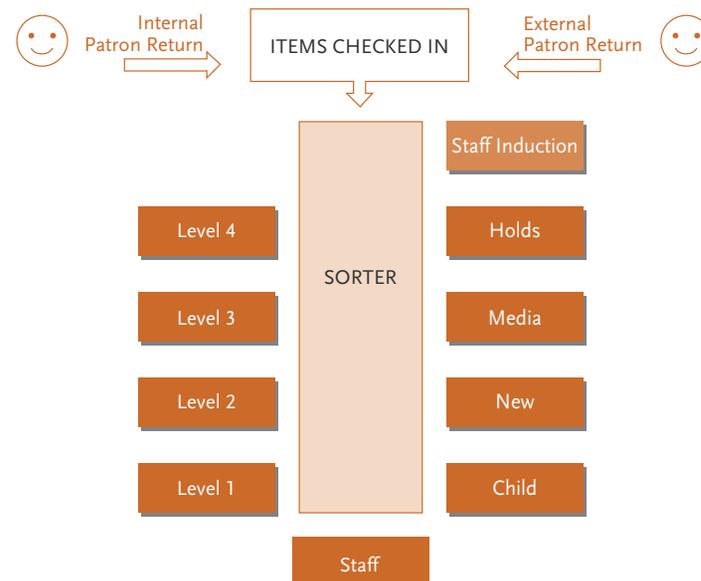


Diagram 1: Sort plan for 9-bin sorter

Using the above sort plan is just a starting point. The idea is to sort items for each of the different levels in the stacks to a separate bin so shelvers can easily unload the items to carts and the rough sorting requirements will be minimal. Holds (as described earlier) should go to their own bin as these are high-priority items and the bin needs to be near the printer. Media and New Books are also high priority so the bins for these collections should be easy for shelvers to access frequently. The Children’s material would go in one bin and will also need to be frequently unloaded and taken to the Children’s Area (much of this material may

still be returned to the old bookdrop that feeds directly into the Children's Library). The Staff bin is where 'everything else' goes and these items usually require staff intervention.

How the sorter should be configured will be something that staff will need to experiment with. For this reason, it is important to select a sorter that has an easy-to-use staff interface for changing the sort plan configuration.

Staffing a nine-bin sorter will not require more than a single staffperson. Therefore, existing backroom staffing levels could likely handle the volume of returns at Central in terms of monitoring bins and handling any induction of material onto the sorter from the Children's book drop or interlibrary delivery. Already, one Clerk is generally working in the backroom answering phones and doing other work and this same person could also handle the sorter. In this scenario, I would recommend that Pages be trained to unload their own bins to the bookcarts they'll use for shelving.

No decreases in Page staff are projected. Based on the number of returns per hour at Central, four shelvees per shift (on average) should be able to get all material back on the shelves within the same day it is returned. This presumes that items are not "preshelved" before being shelved (which needlessly introduces a shelving/unshelving cycle). It also presumes that Pages are spending at least 50 minutes of each hour doing shelving (versus other tasks).

By allowing patrons to easily return items outside as well as in the foyer, the interior spaces and staff can be used very differently. The lines at what is now the circulation desk will evaporate because the most basic circulation functions will happen at the self-check-in and self-check-out machines. This means that the function of the "circulation desk" is no longer really about circulation. The staffed desks continue to be important service points, but they are less focused on transactions and more focused on customer service.

Numbers and Placement of Self-Check In/Out Machines

As mentioned above, there are several elements necessary to achieving high self-service rates including: adequate number of units, placement, signage, staff support, and ease-of-use.

In terms of self-check-ins, one external return is recommended so that patrons can return material 24-hours a day. Items will be immediately checked-in (just as if the Library was open) so no "backdating" is required by staff. A second patron return is recommended for the foyer area so that people who are going to enter the Library can do so, and the return will be the first thing they see.

In terms of placement, many libraries have made good use of the work of Paco Underhill, author of *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping* to set up their library spaces. For example, according to Underhill, since most people are right handed, they tend to turn to the right when they enter a building. Therefore, it makes more sense to provide signs relevant to the “incoming patron” on the right.

Further to this point, as Americans we are trained to keep to the right (even if we are left-handed) so patrons arriving tend to enter on the right side and people departing the Library tend to also keep right which means they are exiting the Library from the left side of the entrance as you face the Library. This keeps people flowing comfortably in and out of the building without feeling like they are going against the current.

In addition to signs, it is important to place returns areas to the right so patrons can begin browsing without armloads of material to return.

Check-out is the last step in the patrons’ library experience. Given the patterns of movement in the Library, it is clear that the self-check-out machines should be placed to the patrons’ right as they exit. Based on current check-out rates, four self-check-outs are needed in the main area of Central plus two more self-checkouts are needed in the Children’s area. This recommendation is based on the industry-accepted formula that a second self-check machine is needed for every 150,000 circulations. The Library is currently using two self-check-out machines. One is located near the circulation desk and one is in the Children’s Area.

Over the years, the Library has undergone some transitions. One important change was the building of the original space with substantial help from the Friends of the Library. And another one was the addition of the Cultural Center and Theater (and annexation of the water feature inside the Library). Some of the decisions made over the years have resulted in a less-than-optimal experience for patrons and for staff. The recommendations below provide suggestions for how to revisit the layout of spaces with the patron experience as the primary consideration and staff workflows taking a secondary position.

Move Friends Gift Shop to Media Center Space

The current layout of the Library, with the Friends Gift Shop located in the front of the Library and to the right as patrons enter, does not support the overall flow of people using the Library's resources and materials. While Library Friends group are critical to every library's success, it is important to separate the work of the Friends and the work of the Library. The current layout requires patrons to enter to Library and pass the Friends Gift Shop and pass through the Friends Book Sale before encountering any Library personnel or Library material.

A better location for the Friends Gift Shop would be the space where the current Media Center is. The space is large and glassed in (like the current Gift Shop) and would give the Friends an extra office space that they currently don't have. And by moving the Gift Shop to the Media Center, this would allow the Library to re-purpose that space for their circulation/materials handling room. The location is ideally located to the right as patron's enter and would enable the Library to place a patron return outside near the parking lot and also inside the foyer and still have both returns feed directly into the circulation room. The glassed in room would allow patrons to watch their items get sorted and organized and back on the shelves. Many libraries are building similar glassed in areas for their sorters because patrons enjoy seeing the sorter in action.

Having the circulation room to the right as the patron enters also makes it easy for circulation personnel to staff a nearby Accounts Desk while still staying close to other circulation activities. This allows for easy coverage and backup as the circulation staff respond to the natural ebbs and flows of people and material.

By keeping circulation staff in the area where the Gift Shop is now, they are also ideally located to assist patrons checking out using the self-check-out machines which should also be nearby (ideally along the rail by the water feature so the flow of patrons exiting the Library to their right is supported).

Eliminate Pre-shelving Staff Area and Convert to Improved Teen Space

With the automated materials handling system in place, preshelving can be eliminated. The current conveyor system takes materials from the entrance of the Library to the preshelving area in the stacks. The conveyor system should be completely removed to allow for improved sight lines and more space in the Stacks Area. The current Teens space is very small and by moving it to where the pre-shelving currently is, the Library could offer Teens a much larger space and one that is a little bit further away from some of the quiet reading areas downstairs.

Reduce and Relocate Reference Materials and Put Media There

The Library, like many others, has been slowly removing much of their physical reference material. So many reference books are now available online that it makes no sense to keep them on the shelves. However, there are some that must stay so making the right choice about what goes and what stays can be a slow process.

Nonetheless, once the Reference Collection has been pared down, it can be moved to another area of the Library because it is now in a prime location. Ideally, the media collection would occupy this space because it is important to keep media on the main floor due to its popularity.

Bringing the media out into the public Library areas and freely circulating the material, like 95% (anecdotal estimate) of all other libraries in the United States do, will be a very well received change for Huntington Beach residents, particularly those that can't afford the rental fees.

Organize Public PC Services

As the reliance on computers has grown, public libraries have had to pick up the slack for those that can't afford computers and/or can't afford an Internet account. As such, the Library has done a good job of continuing to ramp up their available public computers. However, the result is a bit of a mishmash if computers scattered around the Library – many of which patrons are unaware.

Applying a strategic lens to the issue of public computers in the Library is needed. Teens need public computers but they tend to use them in groups. Adults need them for long term projects like resume-writing and health research, and they also often need computers for a quick email update.

Also, many of the people using the public computers need assistance. This is an important service that many libraries are starting to provide. And this is another service that this library could provide once some staff have been freed up from checking items in and out. The Library already provides a “computer coach” and this service could be expanded.

Bring New Books Collection Closer to Front of Library

The New Books are one of the most popular collections in the Library. It is important to keep it near the front of the Library (unlike grocery stores that put the milk in the back, libraries strive for convenience!)

The current circulation desk will no longer be needed if Circulation Services (Circulation/Sorter Room and Ask Us desk) are placed in the former Friends Gift Shop area. This would be an ideal location for the New Books area. It is a particularly appealing area because it is near the water feature and also near enough to the front of the building. And it will be extremely convenient for patrons to come in and get a new book off the shelf and have ready access to the self-checks on the way out, as well as the helpful staff at the Ask Us desk if they need assistance.

Assuming a successful implementation of self-service check-in and check-out, the staffing requirements at Central will change. Some reductions in staff may be possible in the area of materials handling (see below), but how staff are used going forward is up to Administration and staff to determine. These changes provide an opportunity to improve services to patrons. Assuming the New Environment described at the beginning of this report, it will be important to train, cross-train, and gain staff support for self-service.

CENTRAL STAFFING PER SHIFT						
	Current Materials Handling Staffing			Projected Staffing		
	Pages	Clerks	Specialist/ Librarian	Pages	Clerks	Specialist/ Librarian
Children's Area		1	1		1	1
Media Room		1	1			
Rover		1			1	
Circ Desk/Ask Us		2			1	1
Phone/Backroom/ AMH		1			1	
Ref Desk/ PC Support			1			1
Shelvers	4			4		
Total	4	6	3	4	4	3

Working with Administration to make these changes is beyond the scope of this project but it requires a significant investment in staff time to develop not just buy-in for the changes but to generate enthusiasm for the changes. Cheryl Gould (<http://fullyengagedlibraries.com>) has been doing stellar work in this area and is strongly recommended. In the interest of full disclosure, it should be noted that Cheryl Gould is this Consultant's domestic partner; however, this shouldn't take away from the fact that Cheryl has a proven track record in the areas of staff development and change management (among other things).

Over the course of this engagement, two other areas of need arose to the surface. Specifically, the need to develop a system-wide signage and wayfinding initiative and to conduct demographics research and a community needs assessment process.

Commit to Systemwide Signage and Wayfinding Initiative

Perhaps because of the renovations that resulted in the Cultural Center, many of the Library’s original wayfinding components are insufficient. It isn’t at all clear how to find some key areas of the building including the Library Theater and frequently visited areas within the Library. Addressing these concerns is beyond the scope of this engagement; however Wendy Wilsher (<http://www.wilsherdesign.com/>) has worked with several libraries here in California and has a long list of credentials from her work back in the U.K. She is strongly recommended for this work. The examples included in this paper are from her work with Santa Clara County Library.

Conduct Demographics Research to Identify Library Service Priorities at Branches

During the site visits, surprisingly low numbers of patrons were observed. In some cases, Main Street in particular, the location of the branch would seem to be ideal. It is nearby a school and the neighborhood is composed of single family homes. Not only were few people using the library space but, based on Library-provide data, only nine items are checked-out per hour (on average). There is probably a connection to the previous services that were provided in another part of the Library building – the services being provided to the Homeless there may have put off some local residents. But these services are no longer offered there so it is an opportunity to re-imagine the ways the Library spaces could be used (Note: this has begun to some extent already).

Helen Murphy had the feeling of more activity, perhaps partly because the space is smaller. However, it too has a check-out average of only eight items per hour.

Oak View was similar at nine items checked out per hour. However, this branch is extremely well-used with numerous community partners involved in programs and numerous children’s program, and heavy use of public computers.

Banning has an average check-out per hour of 17 and is also located near a school. Its location is a bit more challenging than Main Street and it is very small so it seems to be filling a niche for some.

Each of these branches is keeping their very small staffs busy with their own returns plus a portion of the returns from Central customers. Helen Murphy and Banning both checked in around 3,000 items (each) that had been checked out at Central. What this tells us is that the locations are convenient for many patrons (the ones that drop off their material there) so it could very well be that there are other services that could be offered in these locations that patrons would appreciate. Being able to use these locations to pick-up requested items is one obvious service to seriously consider, and conducting a needs assessment and reviewing demographics data will undoubtedly turn up more.

In addition to the existing branches, Sunset Beach has recently been added to the Library's service area and the needs of this community are completely unknown.

All in all, it might be time to consider a data-driven assessment of the community's demographic make-up, trends, and the needs of the communities that are developing near each of the Library outlets. Excellent work in this area has been provided by Civic Technologies (<http://civictechnologies.com/>). Civic Technologies uses the Library's circulation data and overlays it with census data from the Library's service area. Using this data, the Library would be better equipped to identify services that would speak to the local community and enable staff to make collection management decisions that support the needs of community members.



Lori Bowen Ayre
The Galecia Group
15 Old Creek Road
Petaluma, CA 94952

Ph. 707.763.6869
info@galecia.com

www.galecia.com