



FOREWORD

The Newsletter of the Friends of the Palo Alto Library

Spring / Summer 2013

Monique le Conge reflects on her first 2 years as Palo Alto's Library Director

Monique le Conge joined the City of Palo Alto as its new Director of Libraries in May 2011. Monique previously served as Director of Library and Cultural Services for the City of Richmond for seven years, was a director of the Benicia Public Library for six years, and worked as a children's librarian in Vallejo, for the Solano County Library. She has been an adjunct professor at San Jose State University, for the School of Library and Information Science, and worked as a consultant in a variety of libraries. Monique has a Master's degree in Library and Information Studies



\$2 Coupon for any purchase of \$5 or more at a FOPAL book sale. One per customer, please

from the University of California at Berkeley, and is a PhD candidate in Managerial Leadership in the Information Professions at Simmons College in Boston.

Monique attends the monthly FOPAL Board meetings to keep the Board up to date on library expansion and renovation and other library projects that intersect with FOPAL investments in the library system. After the most recent board meeting, Monique shared her thoughts with the FOREWORD on the challenges and rewards of her first 22 months as Library Director.

What drew you to the job opportunity in Palo Alto?

I have been interested in this job for a long time. Before I went to Richmond Public Library in 2004 as the director, I had applied for the library director opening here. What I learned in Richmond, though, confirmed one thing that I believe about libraries: working for a city library allows me to see the "big picture" – to be involved in developing solutions with

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FOPAL News

FOPAL's upcoming book sales are July 13th and 14th and August 10th and 11th.

Did you know that the Bargain Book Room's already low prices are cut in half on Sundays. What is left at the end of the weekend can be hauled away free on Monday night, between 6 and 8 PM.

The Bargain Book Room is at H-2 and H-3 on the Cubberley Campus.

FOPAL sells many of its high-value books on Amazon.com at competitive prices. You can find a listing of the books at <http://www.amazon.com/shops/grandmabetsybooks>.

Report from the FOPAL Board

This is a report from the Friends of the Palo Alto Library Board. We are currently 16 members, almost all active FOPAL volunteers and long-term supporters of the Friends organization. We meet on the second Wednesday of each month to discuss, debate and, ultimately, make policy for FOPAL.

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other departments to find ways for the library to reach into all aspects of city life. I like that and could see great possibilities in Palo Alto, so when this opening was announced, I applied. Plus, in a medium-sized city, you are able to see a project through its full cycle. Larger systems don't necessarily make that possible. I also knew that there was a high degree of community involvement and support for the library, plus a great amount of support from the City Manager and City Council. That is such a positive aspect of the job, too. Overall, the combination of these factors, and more, made this a very appealing opportunity.

Any surprises compared with your earlier experiences as a library director?

There were no real surprises. No matter what the community demographics might be, people want similar things from their libraries: they want their children to have opportunities to improve themselves; they want access to warm, welcoming places to meet with others in the community or explore their own interests; and they want smart, friendly staff to help them understand and use the technology and resources in the library to their best advantage – which helps their lives and makes the community that much better. It's important to understand what each neighborhood wants from the library to achieve all of these things and how to make it possible. We are moving to a customer-centric model of library service, so the main driver for everything we do comes from the customers.

What have been the biggest challenges?

I'm sure it will come as no surprise that the delays with Mitchell Park have created some challenges, not only for everyone who wants to use the new building, but also for the library staff. We have plans for new programs and services that have to be pushed back along with the construction schedule. But this has a positive side as well. Don't mistake me, I want there to be progress on the building, as quickly as possible, while maintaining the quality of construction. However, because of the delays, the staff has been able to try out new programs at the beautifully-renovated Downtown Branch Library, including everything from lunchtime book club to intergenerational knitting to classic films to parenting programs to tax preparation assistance to teen events. Additionally, we've reached out to schools, businesses, and other non-profits to form pilot projects and collaborate on programs and services. We might not have had as much available staff time for these initiatives without the delays. Another benefit to staff has been the time

to cross-train: front-line staff and managers have been able to work in the different library branches to become more adept at working with each other, learning new systems and groups of customers, and trying out new technologies. It's given the staff a new appreciation of the work we do across the system, as well as a new understanding of how we are one library, working together to achieve our goals.

Can you tell us about the transitions for Main and Mitchell and when we can expect the transitions to occur?

Main Library will close on April 30, 2013. A temporary location for the Main Library will open across the parking lot on May 3, in the Palo Alto Art Center's auditorium. It will be a small collection of about 9,000 new and bestseller items – sponsored by FOPAL – along with 6 public access computers and a total of about 20 seats. This temporary facility will be open fewer hours than the current Main Library and is designed to serve mostly as a quick stop to pick up holds, something new to read. The temporary Main will be open hours that coincide with the Art Center's open hours.

To offset the changes in the hours at Main, Downtown and College Terrace Branch Libraries will add at least 1 new day of service and evening hours while Main Library is renovated. We encourage everyone to try out the branches during this time. The hours at Mitchell Park – both temporary location and the new branch when it reopens – will remain the same, as will the hours and services at Children's Library.

Mitchell Park Library is expected to open later in 2014. While we do not have a date, we will continue to offer a full range of services at the temporary location at Cubberley Community Center. LINK+ service will move from the Main Library to Mitchell Park when Main closes. We continue to provide updated information on the building projects via the website: <http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/topics/projects/facilities/library/default.asp>. You can also find updated library information on the library's website: <http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/depts/lib/default.asp>.

I know you have stressed the idea of library as a community gathering place. Explain.

Public libraries have changed quite a bit in the time that I've been a librarian, the past 25 years. More and more, our customers use the library as a space to engage, with information, with other people, and with their local government. As people continue to

The proposed library hours, effective May 3:
(changes are highlighted)

Day of Week	Children's	College Terrace	Downtown	Temp. Main	Mitchell Park	# of Open Branches
Monday	12-6	closed	12-8	closed	12-8	3
Tuesday	10-6	10-6	10-6	10-6	10-8	5
Wednesday	10-6	10-6	10-6	10-6	10-8	5
Thursday	12-6	12-6	12-8	closed	12-8	4
Friday	10-5	10-6	10-6	10-6	10-6	5
Saturday	10-5	10-6	10-6	10-6	10-6	5
Sunday	1-5	closed	closed	1-5	1-5	3

change how they work and commute, the library has become a place for people to work and interact with others. Students use the library as a way to connect with others in their classes. For example, it's not only middle and high school students who might need space to work together on a group project. Students of online learning (one example is Coursera) meet regularly to study together, to interact with their peers and learn from each other while taking their classes.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of a public library is that we are a neutral place of information. Traditionally, the collections offer all viewpoints on a topic. To extend this idea, we facilitate conversations for the community. Programming might feature a panel of experts who present a variety of points of view on a topic and lead a discussion. It serves to engage the community in new ways which enrich those who attend.

What about electronic offerings?

The Palo Alto Library has been providing our community with resources to enrich lives since the early 1890's. With five libraries located at the heart of Silicon Valley, we witness the role technology plays in advancing life-long education, and we actively make it our mission to facilitate learning in the community by providing the latest tools. In an effort to abide by our mission, we launched a Chromebooks lending program in November 2011, becoming one of the first libraries to do so and subsequently serving as a model for libraries nationally.

We launched the Chromebooks program after piloting a few of the devices as an alternative to the laptop lending program that we developed more than five years ago. The old laptop program gave library patrons the ability to use laptops in one of our branches for up to two hours. While it was helpful for some, the program didn't provide our library patrons with the time and flexibility they needed to explore the Web. Additionally, the administration was concerned

about the security of patrons storing local files on the machines. Today, members of our community, both young and old, are able to check out one of our 60 Chromebooks and take it home for up to seven days.

Technology is an important aspect for all libraries: eBooks have made it imperative that we are familiar with the various tablets and how to download these resources. One popular program that we've recently started is an eBook assistance program. Originally, it was a time to drop in and get one-on-one assistance with eBooks and whatever device you wanted. However, by the third time we offered this, there were 30 people waiting for assistance from 3-4 staff, so we changed it a bit. Now you come at a specific time, everyone gets oriented to the basics, and then you can get additional help if needed. Many instructions are located on the library's website.

We've also implemented an iPad at Mitchell Park, Main, and Downtown which have the current issues of magazines available. Library users can check this out to use in the library. We are exploring other online magazine resources, such as Zinio.

One of my favorite resources is Library Press Display (<http://library.pressdisplay.com/pressdisplay/viewer.aspx>), which provides instant access to 2,200 newspapers from around the world – 97 countries in 54 languages. It's a great way to see how news is reported all over. As we move forward, though, we continue to look for new ways to make the local resources more available. We hope to begin digitizing the local and historical newspapers so that these will be accessible online over the next few years.

This year we introduced Freegal, which allows each library user to download 3 songs per week for free, and to keep them forever. Younger users really enjoy this, and a few parents have reported that their children wait impatiently for their 3 downloads to reset. Many of the Grammy nominees are available through Freegal, along with a large independent music and international catalog.

Interview with Monica le Conge

Discover & Go is another electronic service we started in the past year. It is an online service providing free and discount passes to a wide variety of Bay Area museums and other cultural destinations. Our electronic offerings continue to grow and some of them are available on your mobile device. Keep an eye on what's available.

Any areas of special interest for the library?

Two. The meeting rooms for group study and community events at the Downtown Branch have been extremely popular. Last fiscal year, there were close to 900 reservations. We've partnered with LiquidSpace to allow customers to make their reservations using a mobile application. This has cut down the staff time involved with making and cancelling reservations by 50%. Students, like those in the Coursera group, meet up to study, tutors assist children, workers collaborate on projects, and special library programs of all types and sizes use the spaces. Right now, an IRS volunteer program to help low income (\$51,000 or less/year income) customers takes place on Saturdays in the Downtown community room. The volunteers, who are Stanford Law School students, are happy – we make customers available and they are serving more people than ever before.

The other area we are developing is one of several programs planned for Mitchell Park: a New Americans Resource Center, for international customers. We're

modeling our program after a very successful project at the Queens Public Library, to include a referral service for those who are new to the Palo Alto community, expanded international language collections, and cultural activities and programs. This will be an exciting addition to the expanding base of knowledge for all of us in Palo Alto.

I am married and have 3 children, all in their 20's. My sons are in the hotel/hospitality industry and my daughter is an international student recruiter for University of New Orleans. My husband, John, and I live in Richmond CA. I commute every day, taking a car when I need to or BART/Caltrain when I don't. I had moved to Richmond just before I accepted the job in Palo Alto and my husband is very involved in the Richmond community, so it's unlikely I'll move closer to Palo Alto for the time being. In spite of the distance, I think it's worth it – I love working in Palo Alto and am able to travel through some of the most beautiful areas in the entire world. In terms of Palo Alto, I have become involved with Palo Alto Rotary, which I enjoy and am slowly exploring the regional golf courses.

Any final thoughts?

It's been wonderful working with such a dedicated Friends group. I'm enjoying getting to know all of you as we achieve our goals to create an exceptional library for Palo Alto! Thank you.

Report from the Board, *continued from page 1*

A typical Board meeting begins with a report from Monique le Conge on Palo Alto Library operations and events. Monique brings us up to date with Library operations, including the status of the Mitchell and Main Libraries. Ed Walker then presents the Treasurer's report on monthly and year-to-date revenues, operating expenses and gifts and grants to the Palo Alto Libraries. The Treasurer's report for April, for example, showed total income of over \$24,000 for the month, total year-to-date income of about \$285,000, and total grants to the Palo Alto Library totaling about \$250,000 for the 2012-2013 fiscal year. (Recommendations for the FOPAL Library grants is made by a special subcommittee of the Board, and voted on by the Board at their annual meeting in October.)

Following the Library and Treasurer's reports, the Board takes up operational and logistics issues that are important for improving book sale revenue,

increasing public awareness of our sales and library missions, and keeping the Friends on an even keel. Over the past several months, much of the Board's attention has been focused on strengthening the online operation for high-value books. FOPAL began its online book sales in 2007, and online sales revenue has grown about 5% each year since. Based on the number of high-value book donations FOPAL regularly receives, the online sales have the potential to contribute as much as 40-50% of FOPAL's total book-sales revenue. To reach that level, all phases of the online operation—book pricing, posting the books to Amazon, and fulfillment of online orders—will need to be streamlined and staffed with additional volunteers. This effort is being led by Board Vice-President Nancy Cohen, with support from Ed Walker, as well as Jerry Stone, Dick Grote and Scotte Zimmerman, the last three online book-sale pros.

Like many organizations, FOPAL is becoming

Report from the Board, *continued*

more dependent on its website as a portal to the business and as a medium for exchanging information, in addition to being the public face of the organization. The website should serve as the primary information source for the monthly and online book sales, e.g., by allowing book sale customers to view the offerings each month, as a vehicle for volunteer recruitment, and as a meeting place volunteers. The FOPAL Board understands the need to bring the current website up to a level where it is serving these functions, and has authorized Board member Ann Justice to apply her artistic and marketing skills to the task. A roll out for the new website is expected in a few months, and beyond that, Ann plans to continue to add social media and internal volunteer communications to the site. Stay tuned.

Finally, the Board in any given month will entertain a variety of issues ranging from space needs for the book sales, rent issues, purchase of new equipment, and evaluation of software for tracking membership and donor data. The latter issue was brought into focus by FOPAL's currently aging software for keeping track of member and donor contributions and sending out acknowledgement letters to the many generous friends of the Friends.

To put some names to this report, we conclude with brief biographical sketches of the current FOPAL officers, in their own words. Board president Peter Dehlinger writes: "I am a semi-retired patent attorney, and my volunteer work at FOPAL has been a satisfying complement to law practice. I started volunteering at FOPAL four years ago, helping manage the Gardening book section, then last year switched to managing the Business section. Regardless of the book section, it's an education to sift through the books that are being donated and bought. I joined the FOPAL board two years ago, and have the privilege this year of being the Board president. I view this as an opportunity to learn, work with a group of dedicated people, and help maintain FOPAL's its enthusiasm for contributing to the City's library system."

Vice-President Nancy Mahoney Cohen describes her increasing involvement with FOPAL in this way: "Originally I promised Marty Paddock (then my next door neighbor) that I would volunteer with FOPAL after retirement. My daughter, Margaret, had been managing the music section. So after retiring as senior vice president/general counsel of Roche Palo Alto in 2004, I started at FOPAL sorting books, then filled in as needed in various sections such as political science and sports. Now I manage the Religion section. I joined the FOPAL board in 2012 and serve as chair of FOPAL's Book Sale Committee. I also serve as

legal counsel of the Episcopal Diocese of El Camino Real and a trustee of the Mabel B. Wright Education Fund."

Treasurer Ed Walker, who has the most important and demanding job on the Board, has these comments about his journey: "I retired as an engineer from the semiconductor business in 2000. Since then, I have volunteered as treasurer for 7 years with the Palo Alto Lawn Bowls Club and 4 years at Stevenson House. I have been volunteering with FOPAL since 2000 when I started at Terman at the behest of Marty Paddock, a long-time friend. Over the years, I have had many jobs as a volunteer with FOPAL including picking up books, returning red tubs to the Main Library, internet sales, sorting books, cashiering, managing a section and for the last two years as a member of the board and treasurer. I enjoy reading (mostly techno-thrillers), traveling, and lawn bowling."

Secretary Charlotte Epstein's story illustrates the joys that FOPAL can offer: "I retired from the software industry in 2005 so I had more time to volunteer and to play the violin. I started with FOPAL at Cubberley as a sorter on Wednesday afternoons and was so impressed with the amount of work and energy that went into the sales. I hadn't actually been to a sale when I started volunteering, but I did have a devotion to our Palo Alto libraries because they provided most of my reading material. I took over the music book section about two years ago and was just elected to the FOPAL board where I serve as Secretary. I also volunteer on Fridays in the sorting room where I am gratified by how pleased the donors are finding a good place for their collections. If I am not at FOPAL I am probably playing music with friends, traveling, or reading."

Camille Sarrant, our assistant treasurer, is also our newest Board member. Camille writes about her journey to Palo Alto and to FOPAL: Originally from France, I moved to the Bay Area a year ago. I graduated with a master's degree in Economics, studying both in Southern France and in Greece. I have worked in Northern France and Thailand and, before moving to California, I have lived in New York City for two years. I have always enjoyed volunteer activities. On the East coast, I was President of the Better Halves Club at Columbia University. This active 400-member club aims to help students' spouses adjust to their new life through an orientation week and offers many activities during the year. Becoming a volunteer at FOPAL was one of the first things I did when I arrived in the Bay Area. Today I split my time between FOPAL, classes at De Anza College and other activities.

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Book Sales:

Second Weekend Every Month
Cubberley Community Center
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Saturday Hours

Main Room: 11 AM - 4 PM

*(Free tickets to reserve place in line available
at 8 AM)*

Children's Room (Annex) & Bargain Room (H2, H3):
10 AM to 4 PM

Sunday Hours

All rooms: 11 AM - 4 PM

For details, see www.friendspaloaltolib.org

Book Discussion Group: Second Thursday

Lucie Stern Community Center Community Room
1305 Middlefield Road 7:30 to 9 pm

For information, see:

www.fopalbookgroup.homestead.com

Great Books: Second Wednesday

Oak Creek Apartments Club House
1600 Sand Hill Road, Palo Alto. 8 PM

For information, call Elsie Taboroff at 493-8629
<http://www.friendspaloaltolib.org/newsletters.htm>

Library Commission: Fourth Thursday

Council Conference Room,
250 Hamilton Avenue 7 PM

To confirm date/time see:

www.city.palo-alto.ca.us/clerk/schedule.html

Friends of the Palo Alto Library Membership Form

We are a public-benefit 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Your membership is tax deductible

Join / Renew	1 Year	2 Years
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