

FOREWORD



Quarterly Issue No. 63

Spring 2004



Taking Palo Alto's Library to the Next Level

**A Community Discussion with
Paula Simpson
Palo Alto's New Library Director**

**Free to the Public • Free Refreshments
Thursday, April 29, 7:30 pm
Art Center Auditorium
1313 Newell Road**



Simpson Seizes a Challenge New Library Director Relishes Problem Solving

Paula Simpson, Palo Alto's new Library Director, has been a librarian in one way or another since the age of 10 or 11 when she and her brother established a comic book library in their family's Wayzata, Minn. garage.

Simpson, 50, assumed the Palo Alto director's post—newly elevated to report directly to the City Manager—on March 22.

"I like to stay fresh; I like new problems to solve and new issues to deal with," said Simpson on why she decided to come to Palo Alto after 14 years as director of libraries in Monterey. "Throughout California, the city of Palo Alto has a stellar reputation as an organization and to be part of that was really appealing to me."

Simpson sees Palo Alto libraries as "a great system but with the potential to be greater."

Palo Alto is a "special place," Simpson said. "I consider it to be a very literate community and I think the community has very high expectations for library service. I like that challenge."

After taking some time to elicit residents' desires, she hopes to "get the library itself and the support organizations all going in the same direction through a fairly structured planning process—establishing goals, and tasks and objectives to help us meet the goals.

"Gone are the days when you could do three- to five-year plans," Simpson said. "Today you're lucky if you can do a two-year plan. Technology is changing almost everything in public libraries and there is great potential for technology to assist us in improving services and access."

A customer-service fanatic, Simpson believes that every customer's encounter with every library staff member should be "top quality every time," adding "we have a great staff."

(Continued on page 2)

(Simpson continued from page 1)

Simpson herself has toiled in just about every job a library has to offer—page, shelver, desk assistant, extensions manager--going back to her undergraduate days at the University of Minnesota.

She holds a bachelor's degree in art history and English and a master's in library science, also from the University of Minnesota. Prior to her years in Monterey, Simpson worked at library systems in Josephine County (Grants Pass), Oregon and East Chicago, Indiana.

Her move from overseeing the library in Monterey to libraries in Palo Alto represents a rough "doubling" in a number of metrics—population served, collection size, circulation, staff and budget. While the Monterey library has no neighborhood branches, it does serve neighborhood needs through a bookmobile.

Monterey also has a *Friends of the Library* organization that got started in the late 1990s. The group holds a small ongoing book sale in the library (known as the "reincarnation station" because it gives books another life), and a once-a-month outdoor Saturday sale.

Walking, hiking and reading are Simpson's passions outside of work. She reads eclectically—nonfiction, historical fiction. She recently re-read Ahab's Wife, the story of Moby Dick from Ahab's wife's point of view; and Undaunted Courage, the story of the Lewis and Clark exploration.

Simpson also enjoys caring for her two "step dogs," golden retrievers Lorien (Lori) and Amber, who belong to her friend Aaron Barnes, a recently retired NASA Ames physicist who sings with the San Francisco Bach Choir and the West Bay Opera.

--Chris Kenrick



Palo Alto's 50,000 Libraries: One Belongs to You

If you read the papers or attend city meetings, you'll hear a lot about our libraries as vast operations with multi-million dollar budgets, measuring visits and circulation by the hundreds of thousands per year. In a city as large as Palo Alto, it's natural for our city officials and staff to speak in these terms. But there's another way to think about libraries that's much more meaningful, namely how well your local library works for you, and how its resources personally benefit you each day and throughout your lifetime.

It's that personal experience that I think is at the core of what we the Friends value. We treasure the moments you spend reading a magazine while relaxing in a comfortable chair at a library, or the delight you have finding a new book by a favorite author, or checking out a classic film you've always wanted to see. We want the table that you like to study at to always be there for you, or the computer connection you rely on to be available and working. We want your reference librarian to be there to answer your questions, and your computer catalog to find your materials quickly for you. We want you to see your library as a place to meet friends, enjoy cultural events, keep current on the latest news, or just to relax. Officially, there are just five Palo Alto libraries, but there are really over 50,000 libraries, one for every cardholder and non-cardholder who visits each year. One of those is your library.

It's that library of yours we seek to improve. Last year, Palo Alto had no permanent library director, limiting the visibility and clout of the libraries within the city government. Thanks to an enormous number of postcards and letters sent to the City Council by our members and supporters, the City unfroze the library director position. We then offered the City funds to fly in qualified candidates from all over the country and urged them to advertise the position broadly. You'll be pleased to know that the search was highly successful, and Paula Simpson from Monterey started as our new library director on March 22. We're now working with Paula on many ideas for improving the libraries, and find her a delightful and energetic person.

Indeed, Paula is intent on determining how our libraries should evolve to best serve you and will be leading a public discussion we're organizing on April 29th at the Art Center Auditorium at 1300 Newell Avenue at 7:30 pm. We'll have refreshments and plenty of opportunity for informal conversation.

It's vital that you attend, to speak up for your library. There are many possibilities to consider. For example, the College Terrace and Downtown branches have very limited hours right now. Would it make more sense to shift these to later in the evening, or perhaps to have more weekend time instead?

Right now, Palo Alto libraries offer free interlibrary loans for libraries within Palo Alto, which gives you access to a much larger collection than fits into your local branch. However, you must pay for access to books from libraries outside of Palo Alto. Should the library subsidize the cost of lending those books and also make them easier to find, effectively enabling you to access far more books than our city can afford directly to buy or keep on the shelves?

How important are digital collections vs. traditional paper and microfilm materials? Do you value access to the online materials from home, classroom, and office? Are you even aware of these and would you like help in using them?

Would you like to see more popular items, such as DVDs and books on tape, versus more books?

What subjects should your library provide more coverage of?

For each question above, there are thousands more, and many different ways to allocate the resources available to our libraries. Paula brings many years of library experience to help us better understand what is possible. But you know what your library needs. Please come and help your library grow and thrive and be everything that it can be for you.

-- *Jeff Levinsky*
President



Treasured Local History Lives at the Library

A treasure trove of Palo Alto history resides in 28 locked file cabinets tucked in the northeast corner of the Main Library's Reading Room. Known as the Guy C. Miller Archives, they are named for the first historian of the Palo Alto Historical Association.

Since 1984, I have been the historian for the Palo Alto Historical Association, and am responsible for the safekeeping of these archives of Palo Alto history. The City of Palo Alto contracts with the Palo Alto Historical Association to maintain the archives, and to assist people with their historical inquiries.

What can be found in the Guy C. Miller Archives? For the most part, they are a collection of newspaper clippings, maps, documents, photographs and other numerous pieces of paper. We have a few artifacts such as the first golf ball hit at the Palo Alto Golf Course, but artifacts are not a significant element of the collection at this time. However there is a group of people developing plans for a new Palo Alto History Museum at the Roth Building, which will display many artifacts.

There are more than 7,000 photographs in the Guy C. Miller collection. Some are more than 100 years old while others are only a few months old. Because many of the images are unique, the photograph collection is one of the treasures of the Archives. The Association has begun a project of digitalization in which all of the images are being digitally scanned, cataloged and will be searchable electronically. We now have some 500 plus images available for viewing at www.pahistory.org.

Like my predecessors, I spend considerable time clipping the local newspapers for articles to add to the Archives.

One of the most valuable collections of clippings is the obituary section. Our obituary collection contains more than 30,000 obits of people who lived here. Several Association volunteers have indexed and continue to index this collection, which has been electronically searchable through the Library's website for more than a year.

Over the years (the origins of the Archives dates back to 1913), the material collected has grown to fill more than 100 file cabinet drawers. We collect material such as brochures, newsletters and other newsworthy items on topics such as local businesses, schools, organizations and several hundred other topics. The map cabinet is full of old (and new) maps of subdivisions, Mayfield and official city maps.

I would like to extend an invitation to all Friends to come by the Main Library some Tuesday evening or Thursday afternoon to see the Archives for themselves, and perhaps seek an answer to your local history question. And if you have an old photograph or other item relating to Palo Alto's past, please consider donating the material to the Guy C. Miller Archives.

--*Steve Staiger*
Palo Alto Historian

Book Sale News



Welcome to Our New Children's Room

The Book Sale of the Friends of the Palo Alto Library welcomes browsers and shoppers to new, expanded space at Cubberley Community Center. Palo Alto **Mayor Bern Beecham**, **Vice Mayor Jim Burch**, and **Library Director Paula Simpson** were scheduled to cut the ribbon on a new Children's Book Room April 10 at 9 a.m. in Room K6 at Cubberley. The adjacent K7 room now holds all of our Bargain Books and both rooms will be open from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Bargain room prices drop to half-price at 12:30 p.m. and then to just \$5 per grocery bag at 2 p.m. (we supply the bags).

With the children's books now in room K6, our main sales room has expanded its business and technical sections. That room is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. You can get a ticket to hold your place in that room's line at the door, beginning at 8 a.m.

The new space gives the Book Sale of total of 5,300 square feet of space at Cubberley, all within an easy walk. With three separate rooms filled with tens of thousands of bargains way below even used-bookstore prices, come and enjoy finding the book you've always wanted to read, or discover a new favorite.

Oh, the Places They'll Go!

Friends books go to lots of places – such as to countless family bookshelves, to antiquarian and used book stores, of course, but you might not know that some of our books go directly to our local library shelves – both Palo Alto city libraries and our public middle school libraries.

Around the first of this year, Children's Library added 100 of our donated books to its inventory. Last fall the Palo Alto library selected 46 books for the adult collection. Twenty-four were new college textbooks (a real boon as college textbooks have become very expensive) and 22 others on a variety of subjects.

Your donated books do, indeed, have an interesting afterlife.

*-- Marty Paddock
Book Sale Manager*

Progress at Children's



If all goes according to plan, a renovated Children's Library could hold its grand opening in two to three years.

The "new" library will feature substantial renovations as well as the addition of a north wing and improvements to the Secret Garden.

The long-sought improvements are made possible by the Children's Library Fund, a joint project of the Palo Alto Library Foundation, the Friends of the Palo Alto Library, the Library Advisory Commission and library staff.

On March 1, the City Council approved its role in the contract that includes the Friends and the Foundation, so that the project is now officially underway.

To facilitate the renovations, a cost-sharing agreement was recently signed by the Friends, the Foundation and the City of Palo Alto, setting out conditions for disbursement of funds from the agreeing parties. Contributing to the Children's Library renovation will be \$540,000 from the Foundation and \$420,000 from the Friends as well as federal and private money held by the City of Palo Alto.

We will print an additional listing acknowledging our wonderful donors to the project in an upcoming issue.

Notes from Friends

Neighborhood Libraries To Host Receptions



The public is cordially invited to attend open houses for the College Terrace and Downtown libraries in April. Help us celebrate National Library Week by visiting with staff members and reacquainting yourselves with your neighborhood libraries.

Downtown Library will hold its open house, hosted by library associate Matt Watson, Thursday **April 22** from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. College Terrace Library will open its doors for a reception, hosted by library associate Sue Chang, Saturday **April 24** from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Refreshments will be offered at both events.

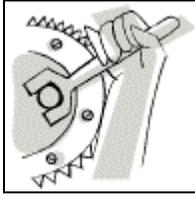
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Council Appoints Library Advisors

The Palo Alto City Council recently appointed three new members to the seven-seat Library Advisory Commission, which advises the Council on library matters.

The new commissioners are **Sanford Forte**, a director and founder of non-profits involved in community networking and education; **Genevieve Gerard**, a high-tech marketing manager and consultant; and **John Stucky**, the librarian of the San Francisco Asian Art Museum since 1994. We look forward to working with them. The new commissioners will serve for three-year terms and replace three others who chose not to reapply for the positions.

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Volunteers Make Us Lean and Mean

Thanks to our many volunteers and gracious donors, the Friends of the Palo Alto Library has very low overhead costs. That means your donations go directly to help the libraries and are not wasted. While the Better Business Bureau recommends that no more than 35 percent of a charitable organization's expenses be for overhead, in our 2002-2003 fiscal year overhead accounted for a mere 3 percent of our expenses. In other words, 97 percent of the money we raised went for the Palo Alto libraries.



Palo Altans Rate Their Libraries

Palo Alto's City Auditor recently published the results of a 1,200-person survey that rates various city services. Eighty-one percent of the survey respondents who expressed an opinion on the Palo Alto libraries felt that they were either excellent or good. Similarly, 77 percent thought that the variety of library material was either excellent or good and 73 percent rated the branch libraries as highly. These are not, however, exceptional scores. The first two questions have also been asked in many other U.S. cities, and Palo Alto's ratings are slightly below the national averages.

The survey also found that 31 percent of Palo Altans used the libraries or their services more than 12 times during the year.

The City Auditor compared Palo Alto's library costs and activities to those of neighboring cities, finding that Palo Alto spends more per capita on its libraries than our immediate neighbors, but less than Burlingame and Berkeley. Library visits in Palo Alto have risen by 20 percent over the last five years to 905,248 for 2002-2003, while per capita expenditures have risen 15 percent. Total hours open have declined slightly, and the number of

reference questions asked has dropped by 19 percent, down to 88,759 per year. Family program attendance at libraries has surged by 36 percent from five years ago, with 33,625 people attending some 517 separate library events offered during the 2002-2003 year.

We're very pleased that the Friends of the Palo Alto Library sponsors many of these events, using funds raised from memberships, donations, and our Book Sale.

--Jeff Levinsky

Opportunities at Your Library

All five Palo Alto libraries have a variety of volunteer positions, from sorting to shelving to closing to homework help. We prefer a six-month commitment.

We also seek volunteers for Operation Homebound. These individuals assist patrons who cannot get to the library due to illness or disability. If you are interested, please call Barb Geibel at 329-2644.

--Barb Geibel



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

A warm welcome to new members:

Heda McAdams, Nini Postman and Paula Simpson, our new Library Director.

A big "thank you" to returning members:

Deborah Angel, Louise Barsotti, Marcie & Chet Brown, Wileta & Jim Burch, Charlotte Cole, Constance Crawford, John M Gill, Gloria Goldberg, Nonette Hanko, Stan & Kiyomi Hutchings, Helen Kaplan, Laverne Kleeberg, Edwin F Laak, Terry Hunter & Mark Wardenburg, Ruth M Moor, Betty Q Moore, Trish & Jim Mulvey, Anita & Ingram Olkin, Mary E & John S Perkins, Rachel Perlmutter, Irene Sampson, Gene Segre, Barbara Shaughnessy, Flash & Olga Sheridan, Margaret & Charles Stein, Mary Jane & Fielding Tapp, Mary Beth & Bruce Train, Lisa Van Dusen, Carol B Vesecky, Evelyn Vigil, Ed Walker, and Lynn & John Wiese.

Please look for your renewal date on the address label. Please stay with Friends. We need you more than ever, not only your monetary contributions but also your volunteer efforts and your voice as a library supporter.

--Shantha Mohan

Library Statistics

The following statistics help depict how the Palo Alto City Library compares to those of neighboring cities. The figures generally reflect the period July 2002 to June 2003, but some are from previous periods when newer ones were not yet available. Of course, statistical comparisons capture only some of the important qualities of our libraries.

Statistic	Palo Alto	Mountain View	Menlo Park	Redwood City	Los Altos
Resident Population Served	61,200	72,200	30,800	91,765	41,047
Library Card Holders	49,448	81,263	25,403	58,730	20,860
Percentage of Cards to Population	81%	113%	82%	64%	64%
Libraries	5	1	2	3	2
Total Square Feet	53,487	60,000	41,800	Not Available	32,600
Square Feet per library	10,697	60,000	20,900	Not Available	16,300
Annual Budget	\$5,300,000	\$3,945,954	\$1,624,293	\$6,179,066	\$3,606,672
Per Capita Budget	\$86.60	\$54.65	\$52.74	\$67.34	\$87.87
Hours Open Weekly Total	231	64	94	162	108
Hours Open Weekly per Library	46	64	47	54	54
Annual Visits	905,248	670,000	467,000	649,206	607,656
Annual Visits per Capita	14.8	9.3	15.2	7.1	14.8
Annual Visits per Square Foot	16.9	11.2	11.2	11.3	18.6
~Cost per Visit	\$5.85	\$5.89	\$3.48	\$9.52	\$5.94
Total Volumes	276,743	271,733	153,000	322,358	281,017
Volumes per Capita	4.5	3.8	5.0	3.5	6.8
Annual Circulation	1,240,099	1,100,000	577,170	938,584	1,745,877
Annual Circulation per Capita	20.3	15.2	18.7	10.2	42.5
Annual Circulation per Square Ft.	23.2	18.3	13.8	16.4	53.6
Annual Circulation per Volume	4.5	4.0	3.8	2.9	6.2
~Cost per Item Circulated	\$4.27	\$3.59	\$2.81	\$6.58	\$2.07
Annual In-Library Volunteer Hours	4,000	NA	NA	78,312	7,000
Annual Volunteer Hours per Capita	0.07	NA	NA	0.85	0.17
FTE Staffing Levels	58.58	54.00	22.82	67.91	Not Available
FTE per 100,000 Capita	95.72	74.79	74.09	74.00	Not Available
FTE per 100,000 Visits	6.47	8.06	4.89	10.46	Not Available
FTE per 100,000 Items Circulated	4.72	4.91	3.95	7.24	Not Available
FTE per 1,000 Square Ft.	1.10	0.90	0.55	1.19	Not Available

Notes

Circulation numbers may vary from library to library based on whether renewals are included as separate circulations and on whether inter-library loans count double.

Costs per Visit and Item Circulated use the entire budget, so are only useful for comparison.

The Menlo Park budget numbers may not cover all operations.

25% of circulation at Menlo Park is video (VCR tapes and DVDs).

33% of circulation at Los Altos is video and other media items.

The high circulation at the Los Altos library is also attributed to inter-library loans and the Vision2000 collection. Circulation has been trending upwards for some time in Palo Alto, with 10% more items circulated in the latter half of 2003 vs. 2002. Meanwhile, visits have declined by 3% over that time period, due in part to shorter hours.

Sources

Statistics were obtained from a variety of sources, including interviews with staff at the various libraries. The number of Menlo Park annual visits is based on an estimate from staff there, rather than a computerized count. The number of Mountain View card holders was cited by their circulation desk staff, as of November 2003.

Web sources:

- http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/libraries/liblocator/library.asp
- http://www.ci.mtnview.ca.us/citydepts/fasd/pdf/2003-04_AOB_Dept_Budgets_Library_Services.pdf
- http://www.redwoodcity.org/library/assets/pdfs/ar2001-3.pdf
- http://www.sccgov.org/scc/assets/docs/2565743_Section%201b.pdf
- http://latc.com/2003/04/02/news/news01.html
- http://www.ci.menlo-park.ca.us/departments/fin/balancebudget.pdf



Join Friends Of The Palo Alto Library!

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e-mail (optional) _____

I would like to join/Renew as:

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student \$10 | <input type="checkbox"/> School _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior, 62+ \$10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$15 | | <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$25 |
| | | List Family Members _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor \$100 | | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime \$500 | | <input type="checkbox"/> Business/Corporate \$1000 & up |

I would like to volunteer:

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Friends Board | <input type="checkbox"/> Program and Project Assistance | | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends Publicity |

Please make checks payable to the Friends of the Palo Alto Library, P.O. Box 41, Palo Alto CA 94302-0041. To use your credit card, join on-line. Visit our website www.friendspaloaltolib.org and follow instructions.

Your membership contribution is tax-deductible (Federal Tax I.D. No. 94-6138777)

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Web Page: www.friendspaloaltolib.org

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Monthly Book Sales: Second Saturday

Cubberley Community Center, 4000 Middlefield Rd.
Main Sale Room: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Children's & Bargain Rooms: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
See www.friendspaloaltolib.org for details

Library Commission: Fourth Thursday

Council Conference Room, 250 Hamilton Ave. 7 p.m.
See www.city.palo-alto.ca.us/clerk/schedule.html
to confirm meeting date and time.

Board of Directors Meeting: First Wednesday

Cubberley Book Sale Room
4000 Middlefield Road 8:30 to 10:30 a.m.

Book Discussion Group: Second Thursday

Lucie Stern Community Center Fireside Room
1305 Middlefield Road 7:30 to 9 p.m.
For information, call Crystal 961-1528 or see
www.fopalbookgroup.homestead.com

Great Books: Second Wednesday

Oak Creek Apartments Club House
1600 Sand Hill Road, Palo Alto. 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.
For information, call Elsie Taboroff at 493-8629

History Book Discussion Group

For information, call Floyd Gardner (9 a.m. to 7 p.m.) at 328-8855

Friends of the Palo Alto Library (FOPAL) Board of Directors: Jeff Levinsky, President; Wendy Akers-Ghose, Vice-President; Martha Schmidt, Secretary; Joe Shakes, Treasurer and Bob Otnes, Assistant Treasurer; Marty Paddock, Book Sale Manager. Members: Althea Andersen, Gretchen Emmons, Laurie Hastings, Chris Kenrick, Gerry Masteller, Shantha Mohan, Bob Moss, Barbara Silberling, Patricia Sohl, Steve Staiger, Karen White, Ellen Wyman. Library Representatives to the Board: Paula Simpson, Library Director; Barbara Geibel, Coordinator, Library Programs. Foreword Staff: Chris Kenrick, Shantha Mohan; Webmaster: Jeff Levinsky; Circulation: Post Haste Direct Mail Service.