

Maud 27, 2008  
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## Report to the Ashland Library Advisory Committee

### Library usage and hours

Library usage is high at all locations, including Ashland, where circulation of library materials now exceeds last year's figures. Usage is higher on an hourly basis than last year at nearly every branch in the library system. Overall, usage levels as measure by circulation are close to what they were last year. Collectively, the libraries in the county circulated 88% of the number of items circulated in the same month last year and that percentage has climbed each month since the libraries opened in November.

Ashland residents have enjoyed having all their open hours return and library users have seemed to really enjoy having the libraries open on Sundays, 12 to 4 p.m. Business during those hours has been high with many positive comments from the public about the hours.

The chart below shows usage throughout the library system for the month of February 2008 compared with the same month last year.

Branch	Circulation Feb. 2007	Circ/hour Feb. 2007	Circulation Feb. 2008	Circ/hour Feb. 2008	2008 percent of 2007
Applegate	1,473	16	944	20	64%
Ashland	24,435	160	25,538	180	105%
Butte Falls	445	6	356	15	80%
Central Point	7,179	54	6,732	77	94%
Eagle Point	5,479	36	4,807	47	88%
Gold Hill	1,678	15	1,754	61	105%
Jacksonville	3,743	27	2,907	71	78%
Medford	42,438	243	35,582	408	83%
Outreach	2,355	NA	641	NA	27%
Phoenix	2,808	25	2,822	52	100%
Prospect	510	8	258	8	51%
Rogue River	7,622	48	5,652	53	74%
Ruch	2,432	22	1,897	30	78%
Shady Cove	2,477	21	1,542	26	62%
Talent	3,422	30	5,652	40	165%
White City	3,732	27	2,786	37	75%
Total	112,228	59	99,870	84	89%

The following figures show Ashland's generally increasing circulation each of the four full months the library has now been open. All months but November were higher than the same month last year.

November	22,635
December	24,383
January	26,483
February	25,538

## **Library programming**

Since the library reopening, staff have resumed programming in a variety of areas. Most programming has returned. Children's programs are being held in all locations. Ashland has a particularly lively children's programming led by Children's Librarian Margie Cicerella and supported by Perri Hauschild-Owens, offering regularly scheduled story hours as well as seasonal and other special programming. Ashland is now offering three storyhours per week whereas before the closure, the library offered only two per week. Also, Margie is offering regular program series for babies and "wobblers." Attendance at all programs is way up. In February alone, Ashland offered 10 preschool storytimes for 176 children as well as three Babies' storytimes for 59 children. The library also hosted four class visits attended by 81 children and 18 adults.

Ashland staff have also led the county in returning a program called Babies in the Library, an early literacy program funded by a grant from the Oregon Community Foundation through the Jackson County Library Foundation. That program is being offered in the Eagle Point and Ruch Libraries as well as the Ashland Library.

Ashland also began offering computer classes for adults almost immediately upon reopening and those programs have been very successful. These are weekly classes coordinated by staff and presented by volunteers.

Library staff, with involvement from the Jackson County Library Foundation, have planned the following countywide library programming designed to rekindle interest in and attention to the Library:

- January – Winter reads to encourage adults to read by offering incentives for reading five or more books
- February – Poetry month in the libraries, sparked by the visit to Ashland of former U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky. Libraries across the county offered programs for adults and young adults and library users were urged to discuss their favorite poems in the library or on an online blog at [www.jcls.org](http://www.jcls.org).
- April – Jackson County Reads, a joint project of the Jackson County Library Foundation and the library system, encouraging a countywide reading of Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury, a book with an important local message of what it means to live in a society without access to books and libraries.

Ashland Manager Amy Blossom has been a leader in the development of all these programs and Ashland Library has been the focus of much of this programming.

Ashland, with a slightly larger staff than in other libraries, has been able to offer a bit more programming than is the case in other locations. This is also important given the high levels of literacy, library support, and interest in reading and education in Ashland.

## **Outreach**

We are essentially running two parallel outreach programs in the county system: one in Ashland and one for the rest of the county. Because outreach was a requirement of the City of Ashland for its additional funding, we have added a full-time position conducting outreach, filled by Amy Kinard, who conducts outreach to homebound residents and

Margie Cicerella, who does outreach to children. Outreach to homebound in Ashland is operated in the same manner as before the closure. Amy provides outreach to 31 residents who are either homebound or in retirement homes, a bit more than the number served prior to closure. Staff are able to provide a more personalized service than was previously the case; by taking materials directly to residents of retirement facilities rather than leaving them in the lobby, for example, the quality of services have improved.

In the rest of the communities in the county, we are conducting a program based in Medford that has shifted from a hand delivery to homebound residents to a books-by-mail program of the type that is used in most other libraries in the state. This system is less personal than the home delivery system used by Ashland, but residents are appreciative that they can control when the books are returned and some are turning over their items three or four times in the time they would previously have had only one set of items.

Outreach to children and young adults in the area schools is being handled by Margie Cicerella with support from Esther Mortenson. Also, the countywide storymobile program operated out of the central library in Medford, is providing bags of library materials to childcare centers across the county including several in Ashland.

### **Collection services**

The book budget for the county library system, including the allotment to Ashland has not changed from what it was prior to the closure. LSSI has made some changes in how books are ordered and processed in attempts to streamline the ordering procedure and invest less staff time in processing of materials after they arrive in-house. Most materials that are ordered now are being processed by the book vendors according to our specifications. In all cases those specifications are consistent with the way books were previously processed by staff, however, in a few cases, elements such as some labeling was eliminated or modified for some types of items. A program called Hot Off the Press was introduced that is similar to a previously existing program called Grab and Go. These materials are intended to be popularly oriented items (New York Times Bestseller List) that are available to library users who walk in rather than constantly being tied up in reserves.

Because of the need to spend time establishing profiles and initiating new ordering procedures, we had some gap in receiving new orders, however, during the gap, Hot Off the Press items arrived, as well as backlog materials that had accumulated during the closure. These latter materials were processed and sent out during the first months after reopening. Materials are now being ordered and should be arriving in a steady flow once again.

Selection of library materials is handled by library staff, all of whom worked for the library system prior to the closure. Library staff with collection development duties are generally given extra hours to perform selection duties. We are sensitive to the unique reading habits and tastes of the residents of Ashland. We are advised by the Ashland Manager and other staff that books that are popular in other locations may not be appeal

as much in Ashland. Staff have a high level of control over what arrives in the library and selectors will welcome suggestions and comments from all branch staff.

Reader's Advisor services in Ashland are particularly strong and all such activities are continuing with new ideas being developed along. This service is expected and valued by customers in Ashland and Ashland staff techniques in this regard provide a standard to be emulated throughout the rest of the library system.

### **Automation services**

Computer services in the JCLS sites continues to be provided primarily by SOLIS (Southern Oregon Library Information System), a third-party organization that at one time included also the Klamath and Josephine County Libraries, but which now is comprised only of the Jackson County and Rogue Community College Libraries.

Jackson County is negotiating with the SOLIS Board to discontinue its relationship with SOLIS and to take that service in-house. If this occurs, LSSI staff will be directly responsible for maintaining all computer software, networks, and equipment in Ashland and the other 14 sites.

We have evaluated some routines and services with the system countywide and, in other sites made some changes to the profile of those services. This has not been the case in Ashland yet, however, we are considering replacing the self-check unit there to a more user-friendly configuration that will encourage a greater level of self-check than is currently possible.

*Submitted by:*

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